

FATE IN ARCADIA

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FATE IN ARCADIA



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FATE

IN

ARCADIA

AND OTHER
POEMS

BY

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WITH

illustrations

by

the Author

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
JOHN KEATS

PREFACE

*Here kneels my word, that may not say
Even to the inward ear of night
More than the laughter of the day
Or the soft weeping of twilight.*

*No waking hours, no sleep shall find
The world's continual dream revealed.
The Living Word is silent mind,
And every book is closed and sealed.*

*Our Mother Earth for daily things
Has given the daily mother-tongue ;
But the mute wonder that she brings,
All lips have kissed; no voice has sung.*

*And even now the usual word
Spread like an empty couch and cold
Measures the sound our father's heard,
But holds no more the hint untold.*

*For He is risen whom we seek :
The linen clothes without the form
Are folded, lest too clear they speak
The Divine Body, buried warm.*

*Then every song is free from blame,
Though silence veil her inmost part
Like the dark centre of the flame,
Or the hot patience of the heart.*

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FATE IN ARCADIA.

SCENE I.—NEAR A WOOD. DAWN.

An old Woodman is at work. Enter a Knight.

Knight. I PRAY thee, Father Woodman, answer me,
Are these dark woods the belt of Arcady
Where lovers pipe away the tender air?

Woodman. They are. But men here labour as elsewhere
And maids here suffer.

Knight. Are there maids here yet?

Woodman. There's one. The rest I bid my heart forget.
Less love is here since first I went a-Maying.
The Spring grows hard, and Winter breeds a
saying

That burns up hope as torches burn a moth:—

‘The world is old, and easily made wrath.’

Knight. A wintry word. I have not sung to-day.
The sun is not yet risen on the hay,
The summer flies are sleeping on the trees
Trying not to dream of autumn and disease ;
I'll sing a song of your ill-tempered saying,
And fright the world where no one goes a-Maying.

(*Sings.*)

The spring is cold,
The world is old,
The summer shines and shines in vain.
Cupid, crying
Ceases trying,
Who believe his words again ?

Who believe him ?
Who receive him ?
He 's a feeble stingless moth.
June is cold,
The world is old,
Slow to love and quick to wrath.

Woodman. Your song is only anger without tears,





And dry and light and Winter-like appears.
I like a love-song better. Lend me now
That lute awhile. Though I am old I vow
I know a younger-hearted tune than yours.

Knight. Give me Arcadian melody that pours
Like Circe's wine, or like Medea's draught,
And make me one of you when it is quaff'd.

Woodman sings.

When old Time from Summer flying,
Turned once more his weary head,
He grew young with song and sighing,
While she bound his wings half-spread.
Every year they laugh together ;
Every year he feels the tether ;
Every year she, seeming dying,
Smiles asleep on her white bed.

Knight. You are a Woodman ? What must be the maids ?
Have they white arms and bashful hair in braids,
And lips that seem to dream the use they know
not,

And feet that pause in pretty fear, but go not,
And wisdom their hearts' quiet to defend
Till Fate the Master comes, and Love, the Friend?

Woodman. She may have many joys unknown to me,
Maids are not shameless even in Arcady.

Knight. Old Woodman, thou art young.

Woodman. We all are, here.

That is the one Arcadian harm to fear;
Pass not within this wood,—the tale is told,—
Lest thou be one of us, and grow not old.

Knight. Old age's hour is not of men deferred.

Woodman. Love fifty years, and then repeat that word.

No, no, poor Knight, I am not wrath with thee,
I'll save thee even yet from Arcady.

Knight. Thou art a merciful woodman, by the rood.

Woodman. Thou wilt be an Arcadian. Pass the wood.

SCENE II.

Enter a Maid.

Maid. Each day-dawn while a single veil of night
Was yet undrawn away, in long delight
Thou knowest, with what a crystal quietude
Have we together, old Arcadian wood,
Waited on tiptoe the lost sun's return,
Seeing the star-sparks fail, the cloud-flames burn,
And circling mist of morning, on the heath,
Lie as upon the grave of night a wreath.
Now, now ! Oh, slowly, slowly ! This is he.
The world and I, that were in prison, are free.

Enter a Fairy, singing.

Fairy. There 's a sunbeam on the harebell,
Now I feel the rolling dew
Dropping off her robe of blue ;

Ah, the harebell ! Hear the rare bell
Swinging loud her ' Waken you ! '

' Waken you, the Day is chiding
Poor old Night, that all men fear.
Hide you, Night, the birds are here ! '
Ah, the chiding ! See Night hiding !
Dreams are gone and eyes appear.

Maid. The tale is old already. The broad sun
Has driven away the dawn. The charm is done,
And though the pale pink islands of the air
Had only for his coming made them fair,
And all the keen-topped mountains were awake,
And all the dim woods trembling for his sake,
Yet when his long and level spear at last
Over the shoulder of the world is cast,
He kills the wonder of his welcoming.
How did the pretty herald harm the King ?

Fairy. Maiden, for all you have such velvet eyes
And are so tall and straight, you are not wise.
Go in and learn to read.



Maid. You little sprite !

Are fairies wise that learn to read and write ?

Fairy. O poor dull-witted maid ! Come, sit you here,
The field-mice fear me not. You need not fear.

Maid. No : and I fear not. Have you read, ' A maid
Goes by the hungry lion unafraid ? '

Fairy. Ah, pure one, I 'm a Fairy. I 've a glass ;
Just lift me over that tall blade of grass
And set me on this tree beside your face.
Were I a man, you have such dainty grace,
I 'd kneel to you like any swain that sings.

Maid. What, little wretch ! A Fairy and no wings ?

Fairy. I sold my wings for wisdom. Listen now,
I 'll tell you all the woodland laws allow.

Maid. But what about, wise foolish little Fay ?

Fairy. About yourself.

Maid. Oh no ! Some wintry day !

A fairy story now, since you are here ;—

See how the listening squirrels wander near,—

Some tale of your own home would please me more.

Fairy. When you have learned my hard and useless lore,

And in my glass have seen what shall not ease you,
Maid, you shall know if I would seek to please you.

Maid. Fairy, I fear you know.

Fairy. No fears avail,
You have been wandering in twilight pale,
In leaden bush, that knows not yet the day,
Nor warmed your heart with any dreamland ray.
Cold, without beauty, meagre, without grace,
Saw you no semblance here of your own face?
Oh, not as it is now. Three years are gone
Since you were half a child and half a dawn.
Look in my glass.

Maid. I see the face I know.
This once was mine, strange Fairy, long ago.
I sulked with silly dreams beside the shore
Of childhood, empty-ey'd and foolish-pure.
Have you no mercy? Let me not again
Tell three years' patience that would turn to pain
But for the dull surprise that bade them pass.

Fairy. Fear not. This charm is bounded by my glass;
Look in again and see, and I will read.

Now comes a change. Here is the present need,
For surely the pink sunrise needs the sun,
Such are you now.

Maid. The charm is all outrun.
I am wise and weary. You have done but ill
To use your dreaming-glass and fairy skill
To make me look upon myself and sigh.
I needed nothing while the dawn went by,
But now, I need.

Fairy. Speak, I will charm it here.

Maid. No, no! I do not mean I need: I fear.

Fairy. You and your pretty sister of the sky
Both need the god of day: the dawn goes by,
Being finished by his coming. If he stay,
Doubt not he is a god, and fear, and pray.

Maid. Must I for ever fear?

Fairy. Love feeds on fear.

Maid. Love never comes to me.

Fairy. Love is now here,
And, being come, may go; but come and gone
Leaves not the sweet clear solitude of dawn,

But only death, fair mortal. Live your day,
And keep through noon what dew of dawn you may.

Maid. Truth is the pearl for ever : dawn is none.

Fairy. Only beware : the red cloud draws the sun,
But what the sun desires he ends. Farewell.

(Exit Fairy.)

Maid. Fairy, Truth trembles at the tale you tell.

Enter Knight.

Knight. This is the Maid. The Woodman told me truth,
And I am pierced with dread eternal youth.

(Advancing.)

A trouble in Arcadia ? Tears ? A frown ?
Here not the heavy lily may look down ;
Here the white secret of the world is light,
And harmless as the stars to stars at night
Or hearts to hearts upon an April day.

Yet, where is grief is service, and I pray,
Tell me your sorrow, angry, pretty Maid.

Maid. A wingless wisdom makes my heart afraid.

Knight. Not, Wisdom too ? What Arcady is this ?

I'm in the world still. Maiden, a first kiss :
No. It is true Arcadia.

Maid. Laugh not, sir.
Since first at dawn my heart began to stir,—
Oh, do not laugh ; your heart should leap to
thank,
I loved you, knowing not.

Knight. The maid is frank.
Yes : this should be Arcadia. Thanked be thou
For this, that thou hast told me, knowing now.
Why do you turn away ?

Maid. Why have I told ?
The Fairy did not tell me I was bold.
No man can love me now. Oh, let me turn :
Be pitiful, and leave me here to burn,
Where I must dwell in fire, for this is shame,—
To bear through night a care without a name,
And through the day an anger at my heart
Against myself, all hiding and apart.
This is no sorrow that your heart may know.
You are rightly bold, yet pray you let me go.

Knight. By Heaven, the Woodman knew! Yet by this
hand

Man's wit has not the grace to understand,
Even in Arcadia, so strange a thing
As this they call a Maid. Stay; let me sing.
Sweet music shall not shame you, thanking you,
I must avoid the truth and yet be true.
I'm frightened, as the snake-affrighted birds,
At simple prose, the daily bread of words.

Maid. Farewell.

Knight. You shall not go.

Maid. I dare not stay.

Fairy! I am already lost by day.



SCENE III.

Enter the Knight, singing.

Knight. When Fate went out masking
And Cupid was young,
There was joy for the asking,
And love for who sung.
The lizard lay basking,
The noon bell was rung,
When Fate went out masking,
And Cupid was young.

When Fate ceased adorning
And showed her snake's head,
The raven rose warning,
And Cupid lay dead.
From moonrise to morning
A long prayer was said

For Fate's new adorning,
And Love, lying dead.

No prayer, and no sorrow
Moved Fate to repent,
And once more to borrow
The mask that life lent.
But the sun on the morrow,
Her shadow all bent,
Made Fate haste to borrow
The mask that youth lent.

Now her joy is our fearing,
Beware ! oh, beware !
Though her laugh be sweet hearing
And golden her hair,
Her old eyes are leering,
She loves old Despair,
And her joy is our fearing
Beware ! oh, beware !

Enter Woodman.

Woodman. Have you come here to rail ?

Knight. I am too late.
She must have passed but now. Can you be
Fate?

Where is some pit wherein to have you hurled?

They say Fate is the woodman of the world.

Woodman. They say Fate is a woman.

Knight. They say well,
For woman is all Heaven, and Earth, and Hell,
Our hope, our harvest, and our long despair,
Woodman, I cannot breathe Arcadian air.
A man has leisure to be mad here. See,
Deafen your ears, and cut away that tree,
What wisdom has it, or have all the trees?
I know that if my heart could be at ease
The birds would build there. They can tell no
more,
They whisper the same message o'er and o'er
Till truth becomes a folly. Go your way.
For me, I've lost the thread of life to-day,
I stand without a clue in the world's cave;
But may not yet lie down, I've won no grave.

I should be moving, labouring like thee,
I am no ambassador like loitering sea
Bearing the whole world's melancholy ; no,
Nor yet her squire, who like the flowers that
grow

May carry her gay flag, nor find I ease
Like peaceful cattle who the hours appease
Chewing at eve the grass of morning's taste,
Till wondering Time forgets to be in haste.
All I admire, Woodman, I envy all.
Even the little streams that foam and brawl
Have more of use than I, that once had pride.
They bluster on with hearts more justified.
I wander aimless, where the wild-fowl whirr,
A bare-heeled knight, and in my heart the spur.

Woodman. What harm has darkened the new-risen sun ?

Knight. I met the Maid. My wonder, half begun,
I was almost ashamed and hid away
My secret awe with mocking words in play.

Woodman. That, sir, is not so ill. No blame is there.

Knight. No, it was ill. She was too grave, too fair.
You may, if you are pure at heart enough,

Laugh at the downy thistle's flying fluff;
 Laugh at the little wild roses that nod,
 Laugh at the baby daisies in the sod;
 But the great summer lily's noonday height
 Rebukes all hearts that kneel not to her white,
 Nor bring as tribute given in laughter's place,
 Seven silences as candles round her face.
 But worse than laughter, Woodman, was my
 failing.

Woodman. Sir Knight, though tears and words be un-
 availing,

Yet in Arcadia the best grief complains
 And no one here his woodland woe restrains
 But every ill to mild confession turns.

Knight. I did not speak of tears. Her sorrow burns.

Woodman. What have you done, sir. See, my axe is here.

Knight. You threaten me, poor Woodman? What is
 fear?

Woodman. I offer so much ease as he may win
 Who in the hands of justice lays his sin.

Knight. Those groping hands are dull my fault to weigh,
 I could not saving in Arcadia say

That I, a Knight, felt wrong so delicate ;
 But no heart can escape Arcadian fate,
 Nor the completeness of Arcadian truth.
 And I must needs betray the maiden's youth
 In telling her soft secret. Pure and cold,
 She loved, not knowing ; unknowing her love
 she told.

Woodman. And then ?

Knight. And then at last I deemed she knew.
 How should she tell it else ? Can false be true ?
 Can heat be cold ? Yea, all things can be all ;
 Fear can be kind, and kindness can appal.
 I am wise now. All who do ill grow wise.
 I thanked her, standing in the gold sunrise,
 I thanked the maid.

Woodman. Why, that seems well to me.

Knight. Nay, I was found a fool ; what shouldst thou be ?
 I should have loved her and not thanked : a smile
 Hid in my thanks, and like a serpent vile
 Made poison in her Paradise. Too late !
 Fate ! Fate ! Ah ! even in Arcadia,—Fate !

SCENE IV.

Enter the Maid and the Fairy.

Fairy. No, pretty Maiden, hope not, nor despair.
Despair and Hope both envy Patience fair
And seek to steal her children. Fate and Time
Are not more enemies. I know a rhyme
I'll sing you now in low continual tone
Like far-off waves trampling the shore alone.

(Sings.)

When quiet Patience moved her sombre cloak
I saw the silent children round her knee,
She kissed them, stooping low, and fondly spoke.
‘These are all mine. Their love belongs to me,
Nor the revengeful rod of envious Fate,
Nor Time whose heavy chain is broken late,
Can win them from my peace to fear or hate.

Yet still I fold them in my cloak for fear.

Two enemies I dare not let them see,'
She stooped her shoulder over them, while near

Came one who, standing under every tree,
Fastened a swaying rope and left it there,
Looped up and empty, like a hollow pear,
And he was her dumb husband, old Despair.

'And yet I do not hate him,' Patience said,
'Though I the mother be of Peace and Rest,
And he the only son is of the Dead,

Yet father of the children in my nest.
But one I hate. Behold beside the sea
Kissing her anchor. Kiss her not, for she
The mad maid Hope laughs at my babes and me.'

Maid. No, little Fairy, go. Your music makes
A tiny, soft intrusion. It awakes
The restless grief that in my heart I keep
And sing and sing to, but not sing to sleep.
Oh, he will dry the blood out of my blushes!
I long to sleep beneath the stream's cool rushes

Since though so near a thing is yesterday
I cannot reach it. If you know a way
To tread the path of Time one step reversed,
Tell the poor world, whose heart I think will
burst.

Fairy. Poor Maid, you have my pity.

Maid. Then meanwhile
I pity your poor pity. Make me smile.
Give me a ditty on Pity, Fairy dear.

Fairy. I will, but there is little smiling here.

(*Sings.*)

On pity Pity, she is sick
Of all the world's endeavour.
She is dying, haste you, quick!
But none can help her ever.

Love, oh help her! Love replied,
'Let my blood cease pouring!
Then he showed his wounded side
And silent heart's enduring.

Old mad Hate has wedded her,
Justice bore she him for child.
Hate is the world's wanderer
Since the hour when Justice smiled.

Pity is alone again,
Her child will not restore her.
Her days are pain : her nights are pain,
Fresh pain she sees before her.

When fire forgets its burning fierce,
The bird forgets to fear us,
The bee to sting, the rose to pierce,
Then Pity's rest is near us.

Maid. Where did you learn the words ?

Fairy. Among mankind.

It was the day my wings fell. I was blind
But I could see to fly. It's different now,
Smile at my ditty if your heart allow.

Maid. Then while you sang my heart went many a mile,
But if it please you, Fairy, I will smile.

You are too small to know how far apart
In mortals are the lips and the sad heart.

Fairy. I know : a child's heart is my native land.
There, many a dream I danced with hand in hand.

Maid. Yes, but a man's heart.

Fairy. I have been there too.
In a man's heart, under a bending yew
Beside the memory of a church, where loom
Vast clouds like mourners, I beheld a tomb
And buried my small mother there.

Maid. Alone ?

Fairy. No. He had buried his by the same stone.
His mother was like you, in memory.
She died but was not old, and mine like me
Slept with her well enough, while for their sake
All round them roll dark waters from a lake.

Maid. Of tears ?

Fairy. Why call them tears ? They are not shed.
Call them the watchful waters of the dead
That fill the moat around the unbroken keep
That walls out weariness and walls in sleep.

Maid. Are there no living forms along the marge ?

Fairy. A world-full, pretty Maid. A heart is large.

Maid. What was your mother ?

Fairy. A childish dream of his.

The thing that might be, and the thing that is
Are mortal both, and mourned when once they die.
Seek not to look over the heart's wall high,
Where, till the final brazen trumpet's din
Sleep a strange mingled company within,
For all the past in death alike shall seem ;
The deepest love lies by the lightest dream.

Maid. Where is the man ?

Fairy. Wandering these woods this hour.
He came for love, and found a scentless flower.

Maid. No more of him. Who lives in Fairyland ?

Fairy. Only the Moods,—a strange and wandering band.
They come like travelling maskers for their day,
And house them here, and grief or laughter play,
Until their service being done,—on—on—
They, leaving the heart's doors open, are gone.
Now must I go, and leave you with the brood
That evening's wings will gather in this wood,

Until the hour when my charms are wound
Round the pale moon, and the dark earth around,
In all the giddy deep of midnight shy.
If you are sad you have companions high
That kneel at the great gate of grief as you.
Heard you not now the slender cries renew,
Then sudden melody our tears to free?
Come nearer. The bird hides by this dark tree
Whose bosomed pain is never spent nor shed,
Who worships with a song until the dread
That opens the heart-gates when love comes by
Makes the stem tremble, as with warning sigh
When in the heavy hour of noontide warm
Murmurs the silence-weary power of storm.
So, on my wisdom, waken fears and cares.
May be this night I too love unawares.
Most dangerous memories my power invoked.
Shall mortal's heart and fairy's heart be yoked?
I'll seek my wings again: it's time for flight.
Good-night.

Maid. Good friend, sweet little heart, good-night.

SCENE V.

Enter Woodman.

Woodman. How heavy grows this iron ! The falling day
Weighs with its twilight always leaden grey,
And now most leaden-heavy, my weak hands,
They fail with weight of Time's long falling sands.
And all companion memories draw apart
Widening the ring of silence round my heart.
I was alone before, but had not known
How little my long labour was alone.
That branch has moved, not by the wind. Who
goes ?

Enter Knight with bow and arrows.

Knight. One that seeks not thy comfort for his woes.

Woodman. The Knight ! What ails you still that is not
well ?

Knight. My folly, Woodman, most incurable.

Woodman. Bear you that bow and arrow for a mask ?

Knight. To chase the lazy deer that lie and bask.

Woodman. That bask at night ? You'll find no game to
shoot

Unless you sing it near you with that lute.

Home, sir, and sleep. Your arrows will sail
wide.

Knight. I would I felt them going through my side ;

Yet I am pleased if I but wound the air.

Woodman. The wind feels not a wound, nor any care.

Knight. That is my anger, Woodman. Here's a song

I made by chance, long, long ago, too long,

Before I knew what hope was, or dismay.

Woodman. Remember you so far ?

Knight. 'Twas yesterday.

(*Sings.*)

The thankless winds, the merry gales,

That fill alike the hungry sails

Of tall and heavy merchant ships,

Or the little boat that dips

And leaps like laughter while her freight
Is no more than the mingled weight
Of two light lovers, both so young ;
She had not wept, nor he had flung
Before that day his hope out free
Under the sky to sail the sea,
Nor found e'er he despairing grew
How sweet to see hope turned to true,
With tender care and pleasure grave
By one slight Nereid whose wave
Released her for a while on earth
Where hid she in a maiden's birth ;—
The thankless wind that all their sails
Now fills, now flatters, and now fails,
Never heard the prayer of man
Since the rolling earth began
To nestle in her robes of air.
Yet has man his treasures rare
To the wind that kept them never,
Vainly with renewed endeavour,
Reckless to his own undoing

Often given as for wooing,
Lovers give that serve the god
Who though blind will take no rod
To stay his unregarded feet,
But laughs and shoots his arrows fleet,
Or weeps and gives his strength away
Ever freely night and day.
More do men as lightly fling
To the winds that round them wing
Like a bird-man flinging seed
Into air his birds, to feed.
We have given love and rage,
Tears and resolution sage,
Prayers for Time to turn again,
Tender clinging to old pain,
Mad beliefs, and mad desires,
The ruddy drops our heart requires
Love of life and fear of death
To the winds,—that feed our breath.
Thus we give our gifts in vain :
Breathing draws them in again.

There's no giving while there's living :
All things pass and all remain.

(*Exit Knight.*)

Woodman. He feels this evil hour, it makes him mad,
I'm a poor woodman, only tired and sad.
Could I make peace with the small fairies now ?
If one came by I'd pull my cap and bow,
And ask her civilly of the magic weather,
May be we'd grow a sort of friends together.
It's long enough we live like enemies,
All through those spiteful dryads of the trees
That winter plagues and harms far more than I.
Ah me ! I'm half ashamed. I heard a sigh,
Could it be mine ? I'm glad that no one heard.

Enter Fairy.

Fairy. Blind Woodman, so you took me for a bird ?
I caught you, lusty Woodman. Yes, you sighed.

Woodman. I'm an Arcadian, Fairy, with no bride ;
I have a right to sigh. Charm me that Maid.

Fairy. Too late, sir ; listen.

(*A distant cry is heard.*)

Woodman. Ah, my heart's afraid,
That far faint sound was like a woman's cry
In such sore pain, who feels it once must die.

Fairy. Nay, not so bitter, Woodman, yet a pain.
The Maid you love is wounded but not slain,
An arrow from the mad Knight has touched her
arm.

Woodman. Quick, quick, good Fairy! Quick, some
healing charm!

I'll give you all my trees to save her now.

Fairy. No need. I see her as my spells allow
In this round glass. There is the Knight, her
friend,

Purpose within him stands that shall not end.

Woodman. Is Purpose too a Fairy?

Fairy. That is sure,
And far the most prevailing. From of yore
She makes her house in bosoms of blind men
Until old Fate shall cast her out again
To die. Ah, Woodman, yes; we Fairies die,—
I shall myself die some day, even I,
Of being disbelieved in. You receive me

Because all good Arcadians believe me.

Woodman. The Maid, Fairy, the Maid !

Fairy. The Maid is well.

The purpose of his heart has woven a spell,
And all the herbs are magic. She is cured,
And shall for folly have the one reward,
That were enough for Wisdom, once well prized,
While poor old Wisdom wanders forth chastised.

Woodman. No, Fairy, joy is wisdom, to my mind.

Till the first sin Man knew no different kind.

Fairy. As it shall please you, Woodman. Now I go.

I've cheated Fate and killed her favourite woe,
I weary of the sight of mortal joy.

Woodman. And I, kind Fairy, whom all hours annoy,

I loved her. I must leave this weary wood
Where I was hopeless, yet of merrier mood.
Men hopeless pine Hope's absence from the breast,
Despair is a new fiend, and we're possessed.

Fairy. No, Woodman. I'll come with you through the
cold,

I fear I love you.

Woodman. Is Despair consoled ?



SCENE VI.

Knight. I will not leave you.

Maid. See, my wound is healed.
Drag no more herbs from the Arcadian field.
I live and need them not, but they lie dead.

Knight. But now you bled.

Maid. But now you had not said,
‘I will not leave you.’ You shall go from
hence,
And yet not leave me. I’ve no recompense
For this to give you. Once you thanked me,
Knight,
I thank you now. Farewell.

- Knight.* You strike aright.
You thank me for a wound. Ah, gentlest Maid,
You are revenged, and all my fault is paid.
- Maid.* Why shines your face within the grey twilight
Like a pale stone? Why do you leap upright
As one made ready for defence or flight?
- Knight.* Because sharp mockery than iron more keen
Thrust through regret, like a sure blade unseen
Cuts the blind heart and kills what might have
been.
- Maid.* Then love is dead?
- Knight.* I swear that love shall live.
But by the justice that your own hands give,
A sister of strong Love that near him dwelt,
Love-like Repentance the hard wounding felt;
Forth flies her soul upon the air to melt.
- Maid.* Yet you are angered?
- Knight.* No. That stroke I prize.
We both stand now heart-equal, eyes to eyes.
One mockery pays two blunders.
- Maid.* Then we part.

Knight. No ; for I go, and go not. In love's art
You say that power resides. My heart is mine,
And this I give you. By the will Divine
Is mapped afar the pathway of my days,
So may I always labour in His praise.
My sword leads on. I follow in God's ways.

Maid. But still you are my wooer ?

Knight. For to-night.
But think you if my spur were always bright
That you would love me honourless, untrue
With overmuch of truth, and dead with you
From overmuch of life in sloth unblest
While the wild eagles wander in their quest,
And find upon the hills the wandering kyne,
But not for prey one silent foe of mine ?

Maid. No. I have loved a Knight. I would not
change.

Bind me the love alone. The Knight shall range.

Knight. Farewell, then, I am going. By my hand
And by these flowers around us, by this land,
And by the lapping sea and whispering dark,

And by the blue of day and her free lark,
And by the swallow that returns again,
I'll bind to you my love without a stain.

Maid. No, by no oath of these. Put here your
hand,

This is no chilly flower of sea or land,
No throbbing wing of any circling bird :
Here is no tossing of the hoarse wave heard,
Here leaps the living truth that you have found.
This is my outward heart you feel rebound,
Whose inward spring on love alone is wound.

Knight. Am I to swear by this ?

Maid. If you would swear.

Oh, see the tenderest gloaming in the air
That folds us round for ever and apart
As though we stood within the world's own heart.
Shall we gaze here for ever ?

Knight. Evermore.

Oh, let me feel the darkened woods,—the shore,
There is no sunrise like them. Let me lay
Their treasured shadows for an inward day,

Within me, and their vaulted frame, for shrine
Built round this hour, entombed, but always mine.
While through my unsleeping soul the gold stars
shine.

Maid. Love is a god and needs no sleep nor rest,
Yet gaze, and bid your memory build a nest
High in that sombre tree, the changeless past,
Where Love's high-singing joys are safe at last.

Knight. My heart is safer than the past, and true :
Its height is yours, its leafy rest for you.
There you shall hide in most unshaken keeping ;
Unseen within me, ever waking, sleeping,
No anger, and no trembling, and no weeping.

Maid. No, none ; for Faith is ever clear of eye.

Knight. I feel the midnight passing through the sky.

Maid. We part then for the hour, but no farewell.

Knight. I, who fear nought, yet fear that word, that
knell.

Oh, silently ! One look of love ! Again.

I cannot go yet.

Maid. I have strength for ten

If you have love for one. See, there, I heard,—
That was the wing of an awakening bird.
The morning shall not find us in this wood.
Arcadian shades were given for solitude.
Remember who from Eden forth were hurled.

Knight. The tale was true. Marriage is of the world,
Dreams are the Garden, and the Serpent, Fate :
And Love is still the Angel at the Gate.

Maid. Then leave me with no word, since no fare-
well,—

And yet I had one last true vow to tell.

Knight. Give me the words, and I will vow the vow,
And all the bending flowers shall hear me now.

Maid. Gaze now no more, my wooer for to-night,
Gaze no more at the hard, offending flowers.
Nor at the breathless moon, too silvery bright.
These shall surround my solitary hours,
These pale reminders of my one delight.
But lean your breath upon my breath, like lips,
And softly touch with lip to lip, like breath,
And swear that loosely as the dew-drop slips

From off one night flower to the flower beneath,
And silently as now those shadowy ships
Ride on the midnight sea like dreams of death,
And all resistlessly as that lost light,
The falling star that none could hold, or save,
So will you, far from me, to-morrow night,
Grow faithless, and so make my hollow grave,
Unless you love me when beyond my sight,
Even as near and now :—this thing I crave.

Knight. Should I not love you even as now and near,
Behold that were intrusion vile and rough
To strike in my cold heart and turn to fear
All the warm habitable haunts of love.
For how should faithlessness become more dear,
Where truth and memory were not dear enough?
Yet surely I will swear that if I may,
I will become a lover most untrue.
If I can meet upon my wandering way
One heart that is more raised above the few,
That rise above the many, than this day
Your heart has risen, I'll be false to you.

But since I may not find what does not live,
And since I hold already my one friend,
And since my heart's a casket, not a sieve,
And since I shall not otherwise offend
Save that I cannot alter love,—forgive !

Maid. That will I. Forth to fortune. Strike and roam,
Be you my victory. I will be your home.

THE END.



SHORTER POEMS



SPRING.

WHEN quiet walks beneath the trees
And Spring has found her there, intent
On memory of last year's bees,
That murmured round the June rose scent,
Then vanishes pale Discontent,
And little birds with star-like eyes
On tree-tops peck the pink sunrise.

And poor mad Hope forgets her tears
Only for this that grass is green,
And where a daisy's face appears
No more alone her light is seen.
The children answer all they mean,
Helping the flowers to plume the Spring
Till the world is a young white bird on wing.

Then the dread Angel in the Sun,
 Leaning above the tossing hair
Of girls that leap and boys that run,
 Murmurs aloud, 'The World is fair !'
 They laugh up answering through the air,—
'We are the only friends of Spring ;
Come, you may learn to dance and sing !'



SUMMER.

Now Time is moving slowly ; heavy bees
Are warm upon his wing, and peace begins,
As though Forgiveness upon last year's sins
Had breathed, and they were lost in the blue seas.

The farmer stands half idle and half praying,
God has released his partner of the plough.
Labour can do no more, and wondering now,
Bids the heart ponder what the corn is saying.

Time trembles at the madness of the rose,
And kneels down silent to the lily's power ;
While, in the sudden hush, like one more flower
The secrets of Eternity uncloze.

AUTUMN.

Now riotous Autumn sung :—

‘ They say when Earth was young

There were two seasons only for man’s pleasure ;

Spring with white gifts, and I of purple treasure.’

Then, with a sudden frown,

She threw an apple down,

And said :—‘ I am remembrance of old error ;

Share the brief feast, and brood on the long terror.’





WINTER.

TIME sought through veils of snow the Earth
Where low she bent to await the sun,
And found a little silent nun,
Dreaming in prayer the Sacred Birth.

THE MAIDENS TO THE MONK.

NAY, Father, is the world so iron-shored ?
 Find we no hope of heaven but earth abhorred,
 Our flying birds unfed, sweet rhyme unsung,
 And light-foot joys we have loved and lived among
 Cast out and trodden for the great reward ?

May all the laughing children of the day,
 The sun-delighted hours return to play
 To find us hidden in a deathly veil,
 For hope of light in heaven to never fail,
 Though now in life we hope their holier way ?

This way of hope has been the linnet's rest,
 She dedicates thereto her sacred nest
 In joys whereof we too would make assay,
 And love, the cup half drunk, half spilled away,
 We wait for who have come when fruits are pressed.

No, not the Master's loving is increased
 By those, for love of him, who leave the feast
 And with a scourge our happy hours assail.
 Earth is not fair to these, their heaven is pale,
 Their Christ no jovial Bridegroom of the East.

You say some sit with him at bitter meat,—
 He gives them pain, and death of love to eat ;
 The poor that labour and the blind that stray
 Receive despair and heavy hours to weigh,
 And those who cry for light and find deceit.

Why flower and song for us, and widened ways,
 And savage hearts for these too sore to praise,—
 Yea, do we sin indeed, being glad and young ?
 Thy word a wind upon our sea has flung,
 Thy choice is fettered trembling on our days.

THE YOUTH ANSWERED.

YOUTH.

DEAR Sage, ensconced in this wood,
By whom the world is understood,
Pray tell me now why this is true,
That not the wise and good like you,
But the poor wicked like us all
Are loved of women since the fall.

SAGE.

Young Sir, when you would use your art
To win with wiles a woman's arms,
Do you begin to praise her heart,
Or first, what once we called, her charms ?

YOUTH.

Poor Sage, you have forgot your Youth ;
Her heart. Now give me truth for truth.

SAGE.

Right soon, O nimble Sir, I'll tell.
But when to win her heart you seek,
Do you confess your heart of Hell
Or first of pretty virtue speak ?

YOUTH.

Vile idiot Sage ! How should we win
Unless with saintship we begin ?

SAGE.

Impatient Sir, a poor surmise
Only to bring my mind to yours !
So then you mask as good and wise,
Noble and brave to tune your lures,

Perhaps the faintest hint beside
 That you were hard and scornful oft,
 But, near so fair a one, your pride
 Would worship now where once it scoffed ;
 Or else that you were always good,
 But here begin to doubt your powers,
 Temptation now being understood
 As never in your stormiest hours.

YOUTH.

You speak but truth, Old Sage, as yet,
 But wander in the alphabet.

SAGE.

Then does the alphabet aspire
 To answer all you asked of me,
 You knaves that work for Cupid's hire
 Well know the ancient subtilty,
 For here your art of love is plain,



And used for every dame and maid :—
 ‘ I ’m good : I love, but here ’s the pain ;
 Love conquers ! you that undismayed
 Love only good, oh ! hate not me
 Whom you alone have taught to fail ! ’
 The world holds no more flattery,—
 Your tribute to the weak and frail,
 Paid evermore by might to right,
 And paid again by fire to ice.
 Doubt not the heavy Snake was white
 That tempted Eve from Paradise.

YOUTH.

True, Sage, to women sweet and fair,
 A tribute paid by all who can !
 But why was Eve at first made fair ?

SAGE.

That was God’s tribute unto Man.

THE HERMIT ANSWERED.

His cave beside the dropping water waited,
 His two reeds fastened cross-wise leaned alone :
 No more he kissed the cross ; no more he hated
 The trembling flesh he scourged on weary bone :
 The hermit and his solitude were mated ;
 The worm and he were friends, and all was done.

The stern commandments were no more a wonder ;
 No danger more of doubt or of denial ;
 No yearning now to rend old vows asunder ;
 No warning in the shadow on the dial ;
 No bodily rebellion to keep under :
 Eternal quiet pardons the brief trial.

Better than he from whom the scales, in falling,
 Released poor clouded eyes and left new-sighted,

His eyes of clay obeyed the silent calling
Of earth, and they to blindness were united.
No more they feared to see sin's power appalling :
The little dusty wrongs of dust were righted.

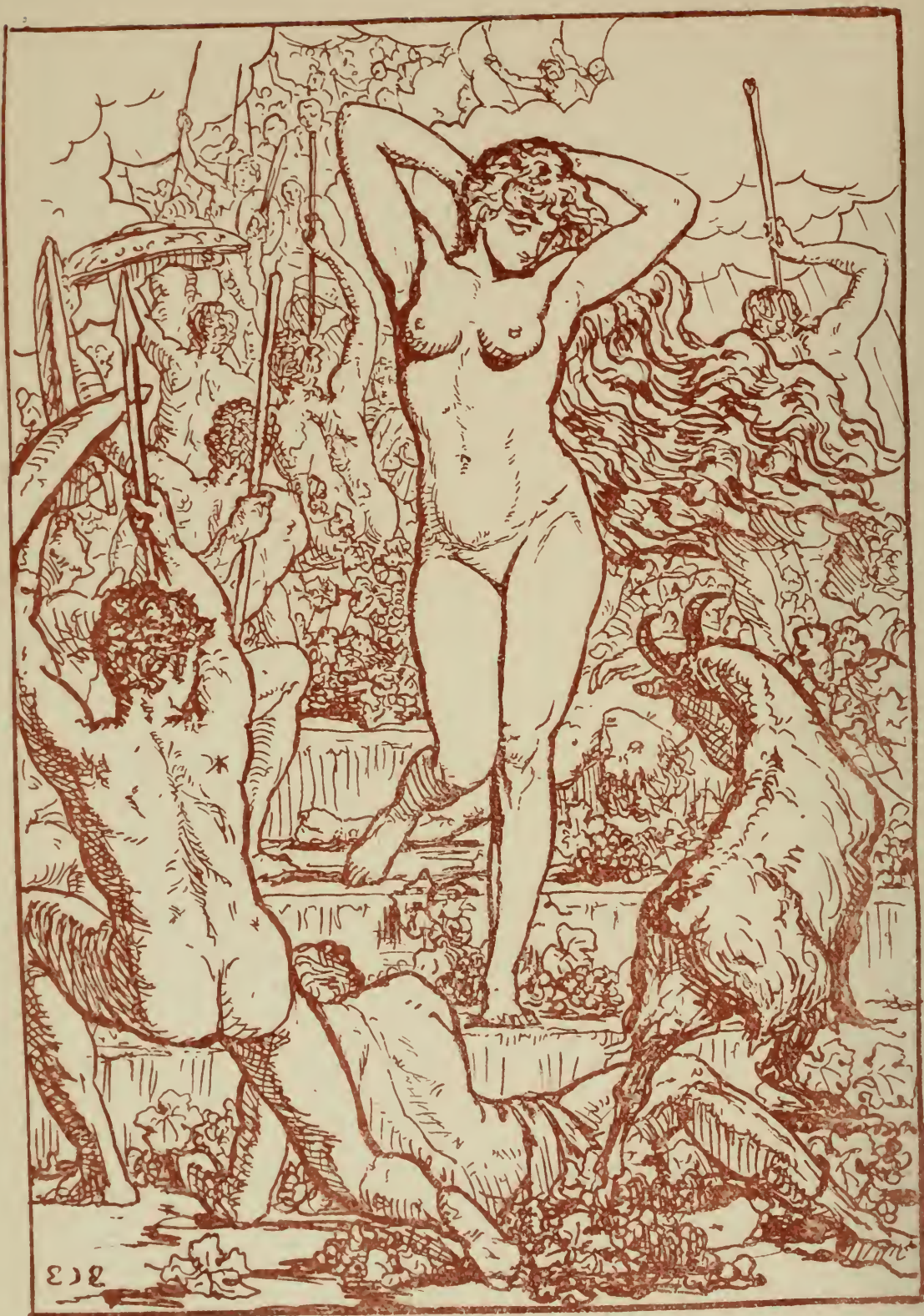
Out flew his soul into the noonday winging,
Like a light bird, and seeing an angel mild,
He said, ' How foolish was mad Satan bringing
His store of petty poisons ! ' Then he smiled,—
' How childish were my prayers, my scourge, my singing !
And God said, ' See, I also am a child. '

INNOCENCE.

WHEN first the Goat-foot Lover paid
His court to maiden Innocence,
And through the echoing valley made
His reedy pipes their resonance,
Her Guardian Angel all afraid
Came pale with cold distrustfulness.

Long and loud the player playing
To the maid with eyes intent
Seemed a god, and she with praying
Never bid her looks relent.
How escaped they? There's no saying.—
All the three were innocent.





VENUS. p57

V E N U S.

THEY say that Venus when her heart is bent
 To voyage down the heavy, happy stream
 That Pleasure, from her simple fountain sent
 Amidst her garden, when the enchanted beam
 That ripens the strange wine in many a dream
 Lies loosely warm on eyes the dawn dew blesses,—
 Queen Venus with the throat of pleasant cream,
 And arms of silver joy and strange caresses,
 Bids all men bleed in strife, like grapes the goat's foot
 presses.

Whence came these wars around thee, laughing queen?
 Whence came this vision? for no more art thou
 Of all men worshipped, and by all dreams seen.

Yea, the sweet fable of thee, even now,
 May half deceive whose wakefulness allow
 Dim night's great riot hold the hair of day.
 Nay, Venus, we will tell thee: hear and bow.
 The voice of one whom thou dost fear alway
 Shall now the charm of all thy moonlight powers betray.

This voice is of a goddess, who hath been
 Long loved before the sea-foam found thee fair.
 And she is naked as art thou, and seen
 More lovely in her revelation rare.
 The deep, dark well-waters her footsteps bear,
 As waves bear thine above the fishes' fins,
 And where thy honour finishes, lo! there
 The praise of pretty goddess Truth begins.
 Daily men deem they slay her: ever at last she wins.

'Tis she, thou child of sunny hours, has told
 That thou art but a sweet far flattery,
 With all thy winding arms, like lilies cold
 Yet burning as thine eyes we faint to see,
 For goddess Truth hath known our maids to be

Far fairer than all dreams. But Love hath ways
 Truth knoweth not, and he invented thee,
 A mask and sweet disguise for maidens' praise,
 When scarce for burdened heart their tenderer lids they
 raise.

He plays at being thy son—thy father he.
 Love is far older than created things.
 Then fear not, maidens, Love shall stand and see
 Even your downcast eyes' cool coverings
 Not over curiously ; nought he brings
 Of burning to your faces, the more pure
 Being his throne. For Love is king of kings,
 And other honour than he gives, be sure
 For marble may be fit, but for true maids, no more.

Nor shall men worship other chastity
 Than this, that waits for Love, and will not stain
 His ivory palace, that was built to see
 His purple garment the closed portal gain,—
 His dreaded bow, whence falls the arrowy rain

Strike on the bar ;—to hear his voice uprise
 And claim his own ;—to feel with might and main
 How he shall win the fort all power denies,
 Guarded to all but him, like Earth's lost Paradise.

And if the King be found not entering in,
 Nor at the heart's gate showing the sacred cord
 Wherewith he binds his wings, whose flight were sin
 If they should bear him thence, though Heaven's high
 Lord
 Smile on them circling thither, unabhorred,
 For this their only service true should be,—
 Yea, though he never come, if hope be stored,
 Or hopeless, on the lips live Purity,
 Then even in life or death is praised Love's Chastity.

Therefore, immortal Venus, turn and say
 What art thou but a mask with all thy powers,
 To this brief life our maidens give away ?
 Ah ! sweeter than the southern scented flowers
 That watch the world in June's enchanted hours

Those women's names who the mute vow have kept
 Through pinching frost, or when hot thunder lowers,
 Until their patience with kind death hath slept,
 And the great fight is won, and the steep path o'er-
 stepped.

What hast thou, Venus? Lo, thou dost confess,
 Thou art immortal. Thou didst joy to-day,
 And thou wilt joy to-morrow. Faithfulness
 Is not for thee. Hast thou the price to pay?
 Thou hast it not. The great pearl goes its way.
 Sell all thy immortality and buy,
 If thou wouldst be a woman and grow grey,
 And yet be loved. Thou hast no tears to dry,
 Still will we dream thee gladly, gilding the midnight sky.

Farewell, O fair Queen Venus, and farewell:
 The happiest hour a true madman knows
 Is when he first beside thy hand may dwell,
 And yet the very lightest of his woes
 Is when he bids a long farewell and goes,

And leaves thee to delight who comes anew.

Farewell for ever. Bright as mountain snows
Under the morning sun, and clear as dew,
Thy memory fades with singing, like the lark lost in blue.



HER TOKEN.

A MANY-BANNERED, gay procession, proud,
 Flowed like a stream full fleeted with the leaves
 That Autumn from her painted scarf allowed
 To float away from gilded forest eaves,—
 A tumult startling earth that sleeps and grieves,

A laughing multitude, come forth to grace
 A newly-moulded statue, fair, upright,
 That bore on lifted throat a dreaming face,
 All formed of gold. When harvest warms the night
 Less wine-gold is the moon's awakening light.

This shape was Venus, on a high car drawn,
 And near her side knelt Love with folded wing ;
 His own face dreaming not, like opening dawn,

Promised the sound of arrows that should sing
Like birds upon the sunbeams dawn shall bring.

For in his hand he held his bow all bent,
And on the bow-string lay the slender dart,
That, ever aimed, and never freed and sent,
Pointed, it seemed, at each high laughing heart
That thronged him without fear on every part.

So past the rounded hills, and mountains pale,
Under the trees' blue shadow, by the sea,
The golden car with heavy fringe's trail,
Where the white horses had been loosened free,
Was drawn by men to women's minstrelsy.

Troops of white girls with cymbals, harps, and lutes,
And shells, and lyres, and rebecs, and the sound
Of stringed things unnamed, like golden fruits
Poured out in Eden garden on the ground,
With their sweet plenty did the path surround.

And down their lines, and forward and behind,
 Sweet music went, for all were newly fired
 With the same singing thought in every mind,
 So that no leader held the choir inspired,
 But all served each with sound that never tired.

And ever and anon, the melody
 Leaped into laughter of such lifting tune
 That all the crowd were children suddenly,
 And danced like ripples dancing with the moon,
 On silver spaces of some warm lagoon.

And then, before to sadness fell the mirth,
 Melodious woke the choir inspired again.
 A hundred gods all leaping to the earth,
 And pouring forth their share of joy to men,
 Would make a less delight than there was then.

So Love and Venus went across the land,
 By cliffs and woods, by town and stream and field,

From spring-time, till the Earth with open hand
 The wealth of all her fruitage yearned to yield :
 And ever as they went the music pealed.

And though they met with Age, and Pain, and Woe,
 And though they passed by Anger and Despair,
 Yet ever did the bright procession go,
 And ever rang the music in the air,
 And all the world was served, and rendered fair.

And ever,—so a Herald promised all,—
 Shall these go by for who may rise and see.
 Ah, Venus, though black Horror shall appal,
 And though blind Fate shall follow threateningly,
 Joy has been here, and is, and still shall be.



25.8.

→ HER GOOD DEED. 1767

HER GOOD DEED.

‘ LITTLE leaves of Autumn’s giving
 Hardly ceased their down spinning,
 Buried Winter seeds their living
 Hardly proved to Spring-time winning ;
 When we saw you last, Young Seeker,
 Youthful, frowning, dark, and close,
 While old pious loves grew weaker
 In your sullen heart morose,
 While the home your childhood knew
 Like a prison weighed on you.

‘ Now unwearied, though surrounded
 By the silver hairs unaltered,
 You with laugh and light unbounded
 Kiss the care that has not faltered.

Liberty to you seems given
Like a gift for days to be,
Or a prize, where none have striven,
Or release where all are free :
Who unbound your bonds ? ' I cried.
' Venus only,' he replied.

THRICE LOST.

FIRST his parents said they lost him :
No one knew where to accost him
 Though his loss had made no showing :
 He was there, and yet no knowing
 Where he was : he was but growing,
Yet his parents said they lost him
And the secret to accost him.

Then his friends found out they missed him :
It was since a maid had kissed him,
 And with no great outward seeming
 He went through the world of dreaming,
 And this loss had no redeeming.
No one knew the maid had kissed him :
Quite in vain they said they missed him.

Now the world of busy men
Cannot find him once again,
While he seeks in vain to nerve them
To high duty, and to serve them ;
He can make, nor break, nor curve them,
For outgrowing busy men,
Like a child he's lost again.

FRIENDSHIP.

WHEN Time was in an idle wandering mood
And stooping slowly down on even pinion,
Where with a leisure like his own I stood,
He offered me one gift from his dominion,
With half a note of laughter in his voice
To know his wings were longer than my choice.

The falling star had found the breast of night,
And hidden there. Dreams of to-morrow's dawn
Quieted all the birds. The moon upright
Dropp'd wonder in the sleep of nymph and fawn
Who laughed without awaking. The deep wood
Had comforted her murmurous multitude.

Oh, large and chainless Father, hear and tarry,
I have a friend ; but thou in thy wide hands
More treasure stolen than thy wings can carry,
Thou tireless robber of all seas and lands.
Thou wilt give nought, saving one day, the End ;
Yet take my thanks, and leave me still my friend.



The Youth Warned P 73

THE YOUTH WARNED.

THE tender dove is fiery-eyed
And purple bloom the poppy gardens ;
Leave the maiden ere her pride
The woman's bosom hardens.

THE CHILD-MAID'S COMPLAINT.

My little Doll, if only now you knew,
 I have so long been labouring for you ;
 I have so thought, and thought, and borne such care,
 If only you could feel but half your share,
 White threads would grow within your yellow hair.

You only smile, and smile with arms out-put,
 With neck stiff twisted, and with upheld foot,
 And eyes that look far past me at the ceiling.
 I see that dreadful scratch is long in healing,
 But, little Doll, I think you 've little feeling.

Do you remember sitting on my knees
 That summer day I made your first chemise,
 And looking so much prouder of white lace,
 Than I remember feeling in your place ?
 O little Doll, you have a boastful face !

I've walked you on every pleasant day ;
I never give you books ; you always play ;
I shared with you the trimming of my hat ;
I'd give you food, if you had taste for that ;
And always I defend you from the cat.

And you, O little Doll, why can't you see,
You never care a bit to think of me ?
I wonder if my child will be like this
When I am old, and Mrs., and not Miss.
It's practice, I suppose ; come, one more kiss. .

NATURAL ENEMIES.

THE Maid was born a Mother
And the Youth was born a Maid ;
The little girl imperious,
And the little boy afraid.

Till scornful women taught the Boy,
And laughing men the Maid,
To hide the heart imperious,
And reverence afraid.

And then they met so suddenly
At eve when prayers were prayed,
And fell in debts of promises
That still in tears are paid.



Natural Enemies p76

THE MAID WELL LOVED.

THIS is my love, this perfect maid.

She knows not why my days rejoice,
 And serve unheeding to be paid ;
 She has not heard the arousing voice,
 Nor frowned nor felt the task of choice,
 Nor learned of Love to read his show,
 Therefore she knows not what I know.

Her silence is continual feast,
 Continual music her repose ;
 There is no shadow of the least
 That Love's great summer sunshine throws
 That lies within her as she goes ;
 The spring-time laughs, the rivers flow,
 But yet she knows not what I know.

The sounding of the world's one hour
Will soon be heard, the light be thrown,
The eyes, grown wise, will know their power,
The lips new words and wonders shown.
Then shall in fulness all be known,—
The secret of the years that go,—
And she will tell me what I know.

THE MAID'S CONFESSION.

THE life of love is all I know ;
Not earth beneath, nor power above,
Nor why the stars return and go,
Or voice of men grows loud below
In envious crowds that strive and move :
I only know the life of love.

No more I feel ; the rest is grey ;
The world is like a shadowy wheel
That turns around me day by day ;
Some kills, and some it whirls away,
Or wounds, and these I strive to heal,
But life of love is all I feel.

The voices come, I know and hear,
And some are sweet, and weary some,
And others make my spirit fear,
To know they die. But one is near

And warm. Far off the others hum,
But not for me their voices come.

Such things I see, but do not seek
As love knows and requires of me :
The little clouds, of love that speak,
And round my feet the grasses weak
Or gathered flowers upon my knee
With pale green leaves :—such things I see.

What mean the rest? I do not leave
Good gifts in pride because the best
I have already. Oft I grieve
To know no more. I well believe
That other things are sweet and blest,
But I have love ;—what mean the rest ?

The life of love for me is all.
Spring opened in the flowers above
And Autumn saw the fruitage fall,
And now the wintry storms appal,
But the whole year was sweet enough,
To me it brought—the life of love.

THE MAID ILL-WARNED.

‘ I HEARD long since the mothers talking slowly,
 Of tempters’ words and ways that end in shaming,
 Of men all weak, that seemed the strong and holy,—
 Weak in sacred strife forbid for naming,—
 Weak to save the young, and pure, and lowly.

‘ All could see,’ they said, ‘ with daily seeing,
 Perils round my coming, round my going,
 Perils I must flee with silent fleeing,—
 Perils I must flee, but not with knowing,—
 Yet must flee, they told with stern agreeing.

‘ Now mothers ye are gone, my own and others,
 Gone are the needless voices of your chiding.
 Men all have been to me as careless brothers,
 None forewarned me of their thoughts deriding.—
 Time derides : I am not of the mothers.’

THE SEWING-GIRL.

‘WHY go you forth in muslin clad
 And tulle and white barège ?
 The Winter sky is cold and sad,
 The Spring in chains and cage.’

‘I have not saved enough to wear
 This fur and cloth like you,—
 You waste your words and waste your care :
 Wait till the skies are blue.

‘Last summer I was always dressed
 As any lady seemed :
 I laughed the best, I wore the best,
 The best of dreams I dreamed.

‘ And now I bear a little cold
 And hear your laugh a while :—
 I saw you pinched when I was bold,
 And tired when I could smile.

‘ And when the summer shines again
 And flowers come out to play,
 You ’ll count and save and pine with pain :
 I shall be wise and gay.’

So said the shivering girl aloud,
 But in her heart she knew
 She could not brave the prudent crowd
 Until the skies were blue.

Her little heart had been too poor
 To know what wisdom fears,
 And soon its robe from door to door
 Was dragged and stained with tears.

Too soon her eyes with love were bright,
Her face too crimson glowed,
But waxen white, before the night
The place of kissing showed.

A keen cold Spring had laid her dead.
Who knows if this be well ?
'She was already lost,' they said,
And sighed and mused of Hell.

I pray we may not pardon seek
Long after hers is won,
God made His poor sweet daughter weak,
Not the Eternal Son.

THE OUTCAST.

WHEN God the Ever-living makes
 His home in deathly Winter frost,
 And God the Ever-loving wakes
 In hardening eyes of women lost,
 Then through the midnight moves or wraith ;
 Open the door, for this is Faith.

Open the door and bring her in
 And stir thy heart's poor fires that shrink,
 Ah, fear to see her pale and thin,
 Give love and dreams to eat and drink ;
 For Faith may faint in wandering by :—
 In that day thou shalt surely die.

AT BEST.

IN summer when the orchard speaks
 In tiny thunder of the bees ;
 In summer when the saddle creaks
 And cattle darken round the trees,
 The lark was battling through the blue
 To show the world that love was new.

The leaden sky forgot the lark,
 The trees the sun, while o'er the snow
 The woolly sheep were damp and dark
 And birds sat shivering in a row
 While windy hours denied the blue,
 But love, alas ! was always new.

I found, beside her narrow bed

A poor old woman who, they told,
Had children's children's children dead,

She saw my thought ; so old ! so old !
And said, ' As old as Love, 'tis true,'
And wept, for love is always new.

THE INEVITABLE.

THREE Sorrows, on the path of narrow pacing
Walk silent in the likeness of three thieves,
And none may hold from them with sternness facing,
Nor save by flight the tribute each receives.

The first one takes the laughter that believes ;
The second the poor hopefulness that fears ;
The last, by chimney nooks and cottage eaves,
Steals from old eyes their little horde of tears.



THE SACK OF EDEN.

WHEN Life the best of Eden-garden fruit
 Shook, like a breath at evening, from the trees,
 And Love stood by, ever prepared to shoot,
 With arrows drawn, and laughing with high ease,
 He said, ' You give of those, but I of these.'

Life shook one tree ; the little acorn fell.
 Love slipped the string ; a friendship flew to men.
 Life gave the fruit from wild-rose of light smell.
 'Twas bitter, and Love gave the after pain
 Following a little kiss not hoped again.

Life touched the apple, red and golden green ;
 Red next the sun, gold sideways, and behind
 The pale leaf colour. Then Love pierced unseen
 Beauty with love of her own form pure-lined,
 That blushed, was bought, or in pale shadow pined.

Therefore the apple was the fruit that drave
 Sweet Beauty forth from her first Paradise,
 Where joyed she ever till she grew to crave
 The praise of her fair body in outward eyes,
 Since when she, for new blushing, pines and sighs.

Life plucked the gourd. Love gave the high esteem
 Swift climbing over life from one fair deed.
 But when Fame, faithless as a summer stream
 Falls silent of her little babbling creed
 Soon fading and all starved with hungry need.

Life gave the fig, that even a summer old
 Is not ripe till the golden juice breaks through.
 Love gave the love that's born in being told.
 Life plucked the half-seen grape bunch where it grew.
 'I give desire,' said Love. The arrow flew.

Life drew up roots from underneath the ground
 And gave, and Love sent arrows through a cloud,

And these were feathered with the faith that's found
 In loves that in the hearts of women proud,
 Or else not fair, lie still in secret shroud.

Then from the high palm swaying fell more fierce
 Fruit that struck hard as iron on armour rings,
 Though white within, could but a maiden pierce.
 Love chose an arrow forth with brazen wings
 And there sent flying the lighter loves of kings.

'So seem they,' replied Life, with gentle speech,—
 'Yet is not this a masque of Cupid's art?'
 Then gave the date, the cherry, plum, and peach.
 Love smiled, and flew the sweet and outward part,—
 Soft lips, of whom love but themselves at heart.

The orange, then, whose flowers and fruit unite
 Life gave, and Love gave hope, and joy beside :
 Sweet hope upon the dream of ripe delight
 Laid as a crown.—Thereat Life sighed and cried,—
 'Love, crown me with this flower as thy bride.'

But e'er Love reached to crown her, Life embraced
 And shook a hundred trees that downward hurled,
 Unnamed and rich from branches interlaced,
 Strange fruit until the earth was all impearled,
 More like the starry heavens than the dim world.

Then three by three, in flight, Love upward sped,
 Arrows unnamed, and joys that no men tell,
 And none could know their number. Then life said,
 While still they flew, and still the fruitage fell,
 'You will lose all.' Love answered, 'It is well.'

'Why is joy sweet, and why shall grief be borne?'
 Life cried, and shook the Tree of Knowledge rare.
 The arrows were all sped; the bow was worn.
 Love spread his crimson wings in sunset fair,
 And followed his fleet arrows through the air.

MALEDICTION.

BUT there 's a sort of tenderness
 To know how little while it reigns,
Even while we bear with doubleness
 And while our name is stained with stains
The gate of ended weariness
Opens and shows forgetfulness.

The man who spoke so slightly
 And took away my peaceful right
Is dead as wax and cold as sea,
 And still as earth, and blind as night ;
And there 's a sort of sanctity
About him now that 's not in me.

Shall I have better reverence when

I lie in silence as he lies ?

I will not wish for it again.

And yet, how well could we despise

By right, almost divine, if men

Might be immortal now and then !

NAMELESS.

COME little Silence, pleasant nun,
And sit you here by me ;
Think not the veil shall be undone
That clothes your chastity ;
Nor fear that I shall ask a fold
To hide from man or maid
The anger that may not be told
And comes to thee for aid.
Yet I have words I would not tell,
So sit by me and love me well.

Oh no, thou little quiet face,
Thy great eyes question me ;
But it were ever much disgrace
Were I to tell to thee

The memories bitter to the end
 That press my lips to-night ;
 For he that wronged me was my friend,
 I would not speak nor fight ;
 Then hush me with thy finger cool
 So kind to many a Fortune's fool.

What, art thou going? I must find
 Sport to forget his name ;
 I'll beat the bushes of my mind
 And rouse some worthier game,
 Lest I betray what I should keep
 When thou too soon art fled.
 An injury should die in sleep
 And be forgot when dead.
 What, art thou gone ; quite scared away
 Because I cried, I pray thee stay ?

CHANGE.

As travellers look upon that whirling sea
 Where round and round the vessels ever spin,
 And spinning still go down, where none may be
 Of all that whirl, and whirling enter in,
 Sifted or stayed, a race where none shall win
 And none shall rest. On this looking awhile
 And moving as we look, who may begin
 To give his heart a little ease, or smile,
 Or joy, while Change drives him with patience vile.

Yet though the journey be so dark to see
 Each hour is as a charm unwound and wound,
 And the waves following, and the wind so free,
 And the far-flying stars with solemn sound,
 And the bright birds, and the soft clouds around.

And Time that going so fast yet stays so long,
 And questioning, with answers never found
 Yet ever hoped,—delights, and loves, and song
 Dress Change up in their robes and hide his wrong.

The circling of the days from hour to hour,—
 Each dawn arising partly out of night,
 And partly out of sleep whose fateful power
 More rough than waking life, more grim with fright,
 With grief more hopeless and with joy less bright
 Is hunted like an evil beast away,—
 For this is he, the Python, whom the might
 Of sweet Apollo coming with the day
 Slays without sound, as divine arrows slay,—

The circling of the days and of the years,—
 The change of ages, of the earth and seas,—
 The change, so unbelieved, of joy to tears,—
 How did this come and go?—from peaceful ease
 To sudden strength, from black to green-leaf trees,

From snow to sunshine, and to love from hate,—
 Which of all these is loveliest?—which of these
 Did Change most sin to spoil again, or Fate
 Folding away leave us most desolate ?

Who knows of this ? We know that there has been,
 And that there shall be, death and change and fate.
 Who sees the good or ill ? We all have seen
 Love lost too quickly or achieved too late.
 We do but meet beside the brazen gate,
 A touch of hands, a word of love, a tear,
 The lips to lips, the heart to heart, the mate
 Finding his mate, or missing, and a drear
 Sound of swift closing and the path is clear.

Then what is left to love, since all things change
 If we love not the changes ? They as well
 Do plead for love. The colours re-arrange
 The sunset and the sea, and with a spell
 Do bind us to their movements, while the bell

Rings the last prayer of evening, and the sky
Is prayed to give us angels to repel
The fear of night-time for faint men who die.
'Night is mine too,' Change whispers, 'it shall fly.'

We love not thee, O Change, nor day nor night,
Nor the unmoving Centre only still
Of ordered things, that stands with tireless might,
And only lives and allows life, to kill.
It would we hate, but love is near. We fill
One golden hour with love's eternity.
Not all the little cup of life shall spill
But to the lip of who has love is free.
Thou seest, O Change, thou hatest ; but not we.



L O S S.

WHILE all the red procession of the sun
Moved with unplanned obedience, while for fewness
The faint stars in the coming twilight dun
Were trembling near, one love whose cloudy newness
Was newer than this pageant, still begun,

And ended never,—a young love that needed,
As all loves need, a tender hand of Fate
To guide its wandering hours that no hand heeded,
Fell suddenly away, too soon, too late,
And left old shadow as new hope receded.

For this lost love in strain of weary war
Strove with the heavy discord all in vain,
And found no refuge firm on any shore,
But swept between swift sea and level rain,
A tempest cold where many strayed before,

And wandered into the remote abyss,

Beyond the ocean belt whose whirling brink
Trembles like meeting lips of those who kiss

In madness, knowing no joy is left to drink,
When they have ended the new wine of this.

Here down the hollow cliff cling Death and Fear,

And far beneath lie Calm and Hoplessness,
And ever-falling Space whose limit near

Is never reached, with old Regretfulness
On wing, that like a bat, lives hovering here :

Down this deep well, whose truth no fathom reaches,

The young love lost to-night fell swift and cold.
It spread white hands, and called in prayerful speeches,
And pleaded with new pain, before untold,
And sought to save its life as Wisdom teaches.

And sought to live in dying, as Faith aspired,

But those who loved, each for the other's grief
Was planned before the time when Time required
Old Memory to serve him, or Belief
To fly before and hunt new hours desired.

Each for the other's grief was surely made ;

How many have been glad, for love, to meet ?

How many sad to part ? How few have stayed

Sadly together while their love was sweet,

Injurious both while either inly prayed

To save the other at any price of heart !

Yet the strange love, across the line of love,

Struck through to-day has felt the eternal dart,

Of him, the Eternal Huntsman from above,

By whom who loved to-day, to-night shall part.

Let them not seek a morrow, let the day

With fruitfulness of wonder satiate these ;

Let them return and choose a separate way,

Lest on the morrow when they look for ease,

Fate may surround their hearts with long dismay.

The sudden stream no faster flows than falling

The patient sands upon their silent hill :

Bury them deep, O sands, where none, appalling,

May tell us of the grief dead loves fulfil,

Or turn our ears to hear their sorrow calling.

Enough to know no one eternal measure
 Shall parcel out our joy by chance or Time,
Nor rareness nor bright light of flowers we treasure,
 Suffice to turn opposing sounds to rhyme,
Though each with love be strong, and fair with pleasure.

Then hopeless let those love who live in changes,
 Hopeless, yet tenderly. Be well content
And well beware, for ever Memory ranges.
 Make peace with Memory, your hour being spent,
Lest you bid Love farewell, whom Fate estranges.



TO EARTH, MOTHER OF ALL.

O MOTHER of the hills, forgive our towers !

O Mother of the clouds, forgive our dreams !

O Mother Earth, forgive ; thy dreams are flowers.

O pity, Mother Earth, thy tears are streams !

The silent Mother of the far-off look

Waiting until the unknown hour arrives

Sat in the firmament, her chimney nook,—

Fast flies her spinning of the thread of lives.

We have grown foolish, Mother, in long fear.

Our hearts are angry, though our hearts shall die.

We cry, and deem in crying thou shalt hear :

Are we not also of thy brood who cry ?

The silent Mother turning, frowned and sighed ;

Nor saw whose messenger received her thread.

She too was angry. ‘ Who are ye ? ’ she cried.

‘ Vain hope the living ; vain despair the dead.’

ESTO LUX.

AROUND my path the golden bird,
 The flying sun, his circle bends,
 And when the Night her curtain lends
 I hear more near her wondrous word.

‘I am within you,’ murmurs she,
 ‘You fear me not, your life is there :
 Send forth the child upon the air
 To kiss my cold eternity.

‘I am the Mother and the Wife,
 The world is on the Father’s knee.
 I laid it there : He smiled on me.
 Be you the mother of your life.’

Then Mother Night upon her knee
 Received my life, my little one ;
 For Love was Light before the sun,
 And all things that have been shall be.

THE MOON.

AGAIN the pretty moon has come
To play with us awhile.
We 'll scarcely cease our wonder dumb,
And give her smile for smile,

Ere she will leave the heavy night
All to its own sad way,
While we have only sleep for light,
In between day and day.

I have not yet had time to ease
My heart of last month's pain.
My sorrow is dark on land and seas,
Though the light lives again.

But now as I forget the rest,
 Of all the moonless weeks,
 And open out my happy breast
 Just when the new light speaks.

And make my full companionship
 With moon and mystery,
 She'll let them hide her silver lip
 And bind her down from me.

And all the shadowy, fairy world
 Around my house and field,
 With dew-drops jewelled and impearled,
 Must fold her cloak and yield.

I had begun to know the tree,
 The grass, the glade, the hill ;
 They had begun to dream like me ;
 We should be dreaming still.

I had begun to share with these
A special, untold thing :
This tree was not of daylight trees,
And knew far more than spring.

With only one more night of moon
The world would all grow new.
But, like a tale, it ends too soon
Just when it all seemed true.

The stars all watch, the stars all wait
High over field and shore ;
Then, pretty Moon, we will not hate,
Your children miss you more.

NIGHT.

O QUIET Night, sister of Solitude,
 Tell, if the whisper of the hour may tell,
 To one who prays where never dreams intrude,
 To live alone with thee and love thee well,
 Now while the unseen reverent valley bell
 With velvet on her brazen circle bound,
 Softens her hour-affrighting clangour rude,
 While dark air drinks the soft renewing sound
 Whose fitly timed intoning measures our midnight
 mood,—

Tell now what presence in the footless shade
 Fills all the void with strange companionhood,—
 What faces near of unseen man or maid,
 What conjured flowers or what enchanted wood,
 What spirit-holding trees, what fairies good

Have made the dark so full, the empty dark
 So peopled with all sweetness, that afraid,
 Who love thee well tremble to hear the lark
 And feel the fresh dawn-wind comfortless and dismayed.

Often and oft again on mountains cold
 On sun-hot stones yet warm in chilliest night,
 When stars are still, or labouring clouds have rolled,
 On long, deserted roads of glimmering white,
 On new-mown hay with scent of dear delight,
 Or under ruinous temples all alone,
 Who has not heard the secret softly told
 By earth and sky, by carved or sea-worn stone,
 By all that dead men loved in happier lives of old?

For the same night we look on has been seen,
 The same half hinted world has felt the tread,
 The same high moon, the very stars have been,
 When men of old might lift a loftier head,
 When giants lived, whom daylight knows are dead,
 Whom crowds outnumber and whom dwarfs deny.
 But gentle night that covers all things mean,

All shameful sights, all sins of men who die,
 Brings these once more alive, hero, and sage, and queen.

By day our world is not the world they knew,
 But had we stood beside them many a night
 And seen with these the delicate moon that grew
 From a faint slender leaf to fruitage bright
 Not else than even as now the sacred sight
 Would then have showed. The half-seen earth as now,
 The sea with duskier mantle on her blue,
 The tender wave that gentlest winds allow,
 As we now see this hour, so they, the happier few.

We love the night-time for their far-off bliss,
 We love the heavy hills transformed by her.
 Who fear in dreams to hold the world amiss?
 Who keep from night her tribute? Who demur?
 In hearts more deep than daylight powers can stir,
 Down in the peaceful chamber of belief
 A whisper tells,—‘This moon of ours, even this
 They saw! They lay upon this harvest sheaf,—
 And the warm wind we handle trembled beneath their
 kiss.

For all these things the Night true love shall drink,
 In all her dew. But most one single gift
 Wins me to find her when the day shall sink,
 At whose low hour more high my pleasures lift,
 And joys from whose pure gold no sand may sift,
 For night-time brings her sister whom I love,
 Her sister Solitude. Let no man think
 There grows a statelier joy than this above ;
 Here is the footless cliff, come tremble upon the brink.

The inmost heart of Heaven, O Solitude,
 Feels thee within her centre. The wide wing
 Of all the flying stars in multitude,—
 Their outmost pinion—fans no different thing.
 Well know they as they ever fly and sing,
 That thou who fliest and singest not art more
 Than they or we, of more eternal mood,
 Of higher reach remote, of depth to endure
 Till all that once were thine shall feel thy power
 renewed.

A WOMAN SEEN IN DREAMS.

I saw a lady tall and slim ;
Her soul behind her silent face
Was like a greyhound lean of limb,
And restless with a hungry grace.
She came when summer nights were dim,
And sunset in the silent space

Had left a little secret ray,
And darkness had not time to grow,
And Night had still the hand of Day,
As in the utmost hills where snow
All summer scarcely melts away,
Or like in childhood long ago.

Where noon was curtained round with dreams
 That linger until night returns,
 As through the light their inward streams
 Flow on to where the whirlpool churns,
 And draws down every thought that seems
 Fuel for the nether fire that burns.

Mad Sleep, wild Whirlpool all have feared !
 Calm Sleep, whose waters all have swum !
 Light Sleep, whose silver foam has seemed
 Like dawn before the day had come !
 I saw a lady tall and weird,
 Whose hungry soul was fierce, but dumb.

Thou didst not tell me she was Queen,
 But I, thy servant, knew her well.
 She bore the mark of those who lean
 Too long above the fumes of Hell,
 Until upon their brow is seen
 The gloomy signs that peace repel.

She bore upon her hands the trace
 Of pain and rest and love and loss ;
 Yet bore she not in any place
 The tomb-stone velvet stain of moss ;
 Nor was there shining in her face
 The crescent, nor the sacred cross.

Too strange for love, too young for peace,
 Too pitiful for endless wars,
 When only pain might bring release
 She fought, and won the wound that pours,
 With silent streams that still increase,
 Near the eternal ocean shores.

For, ever where she gave a wound,
 For him that bore, her own heart bled ;
 And when with weary battle swooned
 The friend she fought, and comforted,
 Then she rose up and softly tuned
 His harp, and sang for anger dead.

No one might hold her life for long,
 Or rule her long, or dare to keep
 His hand upon her shoulder strong,
 With yoke of love, or hope to reap
 The fruit she sowed, or learn her song,
 Save only thou, and I, O Sleep.

O Sleep ! O Wakefulness of heart !
 O last escape from wilderness !
 O sudden home in every part
 Of all the path of homelessness !
 O Land with never tower or chart !
 O Sea of dark tempestuousness !

In thee I met her first, and told
 Thy furthest secret in her ear.
 I turned without the terrors cold
 That lined her cloak, and bound the fear
 That like a leaden hand laid hold,
 And reached across from year to year.

For all her woe was false remorse,
 And all her fear was pity keen,
 And all her straying from the course,
 And all her thirst and hunger lean,
 Were sorrow at her own heart's force,
 And wonder she could not be Queen.

Yet she was Queen, but had not felt
 Her crown, nor known her country yet,
 Refusing Earth where rain-drops pelt,
 Though like a lover's face was wet
 The face of Earth that wept and knelt,
 Till thou and I and she were met.

But thou and I and she, O Sleep,
 Are made as one, and safely tread
 Upon the ever-breathing deep,
 That springs beneath, and widely spread
 Still opens far as on we sweep,
 So swiftly Fate is now outsped.

Now knows she well her realm, and knows

First pride was good, but might not last,

And hunger good, a hound that grows

The stronger, flying light and fast,

But Sleep is best, for Time that mows

Strikes vainly as the dream goes past.

In wakeful hours we might have sought,

She for her throne and I for her,

How many days? But thou hast taught

The path to each dim wanderer,

Nor longer travelling distraught,

Nor knowing where our thresholds were.

Therefore I praise thee, Sleep, and pray

For her who spares to use her right,

And live as Queen from day to day,—

Crown her for me from night to night,

And I will woo her soul to stay

And gleam through all thy palace bright.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

Ah, dream-known love, behold my masquerade
 Comes now with winter joys and winter fears,—
 Fears waiting warmth, and pleasures frost-afraid.
 Now sleep and love have risen from feast of tears :
 They have enough ; their hour of comfort nears :
 We freely gave them both our hearts to break ;
 They pressed us hard, but spared, and undismayed
 We turn the wheel of Night whose children wake
 From the great deep, in all her power arrayed.

The masque begins before our closing eyes
 Have warmed with drooping lids the wells beneath :
 Our masque begins, like mutable autumn skies
 Or shades of clouds following on mountain heath.
 Out leaping like a sword from velvet sheath



The bright slight visions come, so keen and free,
 Or even as the sea-gulls white arise
 One after one above the dark blue sea,
 Flying on the sunbeam's bosom like the light foam
 that flies.

All unaware Silence has come and gone,
 But well we saw her face, with lips apart,
 And one still finger, lying her mouth upon—
 The other hand between her throat and heart,
 She sailed across the chamber like a dart
 That wings the summer sky from long-drawn bow ;
 We saw her shoeless feet that waken none,
 As in and out at night unheard they go ;
 Shall we love her the best ? Comes there some
 worthier one ?

Who went out after like a twilight flying,
 Or like a Winter that forgets to blow
 His tempest while the rain-dark trees are drying ?
 A dull grey shadow between mist and snow.
 Yet at the first did many a colour go

Glowing across her face, and many a train
 Of robes she drew, like to an actress trying
 To figure queens, and all their proudness show ;
 Half smiling leaped she in, but crept away half crying.

Shall we love her the best ? We saw her name
 Upon her turning shoulder,—Memory.
 We called her not, because alone she came,
 Who might with all the Muses, three by three,
 Have trooped toward us in sweet company :
 For she their mother is. They sing, they play,
 They fill the world with sweet delight and fame,
 To win her to endure her life's long day ;
 They rouse her, being in faint, and bear her forth,
 being lame.

No, no ; her daughters only, never she
 May win our heart of love and flowing praise.
 Like streams from highest hills toward the sea,
 They come most musical from loftiest ways,
 From where the ever-watchful mountains raise



Their calm above the quarrel of wind and hail,
 Or from men's hearts as high as these, know we,
 The never-slighted Muses without fail
 Tribute receive free given, service from all the free.

The Muses only, in their turn have power
 To fitly serve our joy and soothe our grief;
 They only in the pauses of the shower,
 Like birds in Spring upon the dripping leaf,
 Sing loud to make the wintry pain more brief.
 Dead Joy they lift, new breathing, from his tomb,
 They plead with dull Despair in each soft flower,
 Tear-blinded grief, out of his darkened room,
 Entice they, showing how God has known as bitter
 an hour.

Our masque shall see them come, and love them well.
 But Memory, who followed Silence first,
 Because Love knows the tale that she would tell,
 Shall not unkindly go from us accurst;
 Love knows we yet may wish to see reversed

Our lives within her mirror, while we bend,
 Watching from far-off hours, how this night fell,
 Reading the lost beginning from the end,—
 Then shall we glean her echoes, nor the least words
 repel.

But one comes now whose footsteps disarrange,
 And drive all other shadows from their place,—
 Love,—Love himself,—his look again more strange
 Than when we saw him last ; within his face
 More light ; his hair more tossed in windy race ;
 Upon his hand more high the starting veins ;
 His blood in circling wild more seen to range
 Beneath his breast until his throat it gains ;
 And ever, upon his lip, some fear-reminding change.

Love, is it not enough that always near,
 And half seen through you hide behind our lives,
 Like to a hiding nymph in pretty fear,
 When footfalls tell the hot-lipped faun arrives ?
 Deep in our hearts, like bees within the hives



Thou murmurest, building walls of sweet on sweet,
 Unseen, unresting at thy labours dear,
 Thy flight forgotten, and thy broad wings fleet,
 And all the unmeasured dome serene and calm and
 clear.

Thy bandage thou hast taken from thine eyes,
 Was this to bid us bind thy unused wings?
 It is enough; we know thou knowest the skies:
 We know thou fliest above the lark that sings.
 O Love, we know all far mysterious things
 Save one, that, seeing thee now, we cannot fail
 To feel new trouble in our hearts arise,
 And even while with thoughts of Time grown pale,
 An arrogant peace of heart, like runners that win the
 prize.

This is great joy, and yet we scarce desire
 Too often thee to see, so strong, so near,
 Thy children burned are we, who fear thy fire,
 Yet must we ever grasp thy beacon clear,
 Now kneel we silent, and thy words revere.

Speak to us, Love ; or if thy wisdom high
 Far from thy parted lips to-night retire,
 Sign with thy hand,—rebuke if low we lie,—
 More thy great wing whose wind alone can lift us
 higher.

‘ Servants who serve, we truly of no choice,
 But thirst of heart for heart’s diviner drinking,’
 So answered Love in his deep ocean voice,
 With murmur as of waves,—‘ your gift unshrinking
 While still you give, in humbleness down sinking
 I do receive, and hoard your tribute-tears,
 Though dark the hour, for day your grief annoys.
 Knowing me near as now, you feel my fears ;
 Joy seen at hand is terror ; only far hopes rejoice :

‘ Endure ; endure, but closely hold and sure,
 More closely hold my faith, as face on face,
 Until this vision vanish from before
 Your eyes, whose sorrow I know, and leave in place
 A sweet consoling every hour to grace.

The time of need is coming near. Hold fast
 My friendship that is yours for evermore.
 So while the strain of seeing me near goes past,
 With aid of sadness looked for, bid the wild soul endure.'

We have obeyed, and surely now he goes,
 Is it not well, dear dream, we have obeyed ?
 Let us return to hope and to repose,
 He has not faded as the others fade,
 Nor floated out of reach, nor distant strayed,
 But through us passed in our hearts made nest ;
 We sought a masque to please the evening's close,
 But stronger truth came near and all possessed,
 Peace ; we no more desire new shadows or more
 shows.

Peace : for what form after Love's face is known ?
 None welcome and none worshipped, none that cheers,
 Unless the Shadow of Great Peace alone.
 He comes,—a thought of rest,—no form appears.
 He leans toward us from the unknown years,

And from an hour unknown he holds a hand,
 So small in seeming, like a child's ungrown,—
 For first of life and love to understand,
 Much must we see go by, in hours more near well
 shown.

Our masquers go. Untold the rest we feel,
 Unbodied and unnamed; unknown of these.
 We thread the caves of Sleep and wind the reel.
 Her haunt is deeper than the Indian seas,
 More mirrored stars, more pearls, more mysteries.
 We carve her silent stream with floating light,
 As emerald carved beneath a vessel's keel,—
 Yielding to full persuasion of soft night,
 While on his bare-foot path Time and his scythe may
 steal.

THE SHEPHERD.

SHEPHERD flute me tenderly

A tune for summer fair :

Little grasses slenderly

Dance with summer there :

All along the valley going

Like a second river flowing,

Shepherd flute me tenderly

A tune for summer fair.

Music feeds the flowers growing,

Music fills the river flowing.

What should empty morning do

With her dome of open blue

Where the little birds are winging ?

They have given their music ringing

Far and soft and tenderly

Along the valley fair.

Flute me now more loud and clear,
 'Tis the noon of all the year.
 Flute me till the day rejoices,
 Till the mountains find their voices,
 Till the trees replying often
 Wave us in where shadows soften,
 Till the sun his vintage olden
 Pours abroad on evening golden.
 Then bring home your fluting slowly,
 Lest the twilight breezes moan :
 Night is lighting candles holy
 Round the far eternal throne :
 Pray we live not all alone.

Flute again more tenderly
 To the fair of fair :
 See her waiting slenderly
 In the moonlit air.

A MEETING.

ALONE and wandering, far and late,
Along a moonlit mountain moor
Sudden I saw the face of Fate,
And knew the ancient frown she bore.
Beneath it glowed the unsleeping look
Of eyes long pondering on her book
Whose leaves turn one relentless way.
Wherein, for ever, night or day,
Is never any word but one ;—
She went to chain the unrisen sun.

I would not let her pass me by
But stood before her, though as froth
Before the wind, and asked her why
In our old world are grief and wrath.

In vain we laugh. In vain we sing.
 Old anger lulled to slumbering
 Awakes up stronger.

Then she stood,
 Saying, 'Grief and wrath have earned their ends
 But may not end. Companionhood
 That gives you all the dead for friends
 Will go when grief and anger go.

For those your unseen brothers knew
 Poor foolish fury, and brief woe.

Your peace of heart would hide the view
 You hold of them, as light may hide

Your living world from dream and sleep.
 Then were they dead as none have died

Should beating hearts no image keep.
 Oh, wish not thee poor multitudes

A double death so dark and deep.
 But when new grief or wrath intrudes,
 Brood on the immemorial wrong
 And pass in sorrow and rage and song.

AN ARABIAN PROVERB.

‘ Man travels in the dark, and man’s fate travels in the dark to meet him.’

WHO comes alone across the mountains hoary ?

Who comes alone beneath the high white moon ?

The mountains to the mountain tell her story ;

The midnights to the midnight sing her tune.

One link, one last, of every chained succession,

One mountain, the last pathway of the hills,

Receives the wisdom of the long procession,

The gathered murmur of the foaming rills.

The End, the End, the burden of their sounding

That follows through the dawning and the dark,—

The End is marching while the deer are bounding,

The End is crawling by the climbing lark.

We go to meet her in the haste of travel,
 We go to meet her in the warm, soft sleep ;
 We spin our busy web, or we unravel,
 We lose the path, but the appointment keep.

Long, long, and long, the bird on open pinion
 Flies near the golden breathing of the sun,
 But yet his unseen shadow has dominion :
 He sinks ; his shadow and himself are one.

O moment, little moment, thou hast rounded
 The full proud years, thou servant of the End !
 Thou doorkeeper that openest the unbounded,
 Thou last companion, wilt thou be our friend ?

O mingling of the motherhoods ! O giving
 That bearest off the gifts that close and cling !
 O sudden Truth, more naked than all living !
 Be our white bride and bear the eternal ring.

THE SEVEN ATMOSPHERES.

Too long the sevenfold wreath of air we breathed
 And saw them not seven garlands hung for praise—
 As round the garden-god in simpler days
 A sevenfold prayer of fruits and flowers was wreathed;
 And every savour and symbol of fruit and flower
 Bore separate honour to the god's one power,
 Hiding and showing and knowing him always.

Our lips, the garland outermost, the air,
 The common daily air, like grass unsown,
 The world's unlaboured easiest robe is shown,
 No more to help, unpraised, sweet life and fair.
 Like milk it feeds the infant in his growing,
 Until his eyes with thirst of wordless knowing
 Breathe in with sight an air to lips unknown.

But garland within, garland in perfection
 Lies folded still. We bow and breathe and find
 A third soft air, the atmosphere of mind,
 Whose sun and rain are pleasure and dejection,
 Whose wind is will, whose warmth is love, whose
 being
 Remote from heavier climes of breath and seeing,
 To change their weight for power has made election.

The fourth, remoter, half escapes all power.
 We name the breather, and with mute believing
 Know him the centre of the garland's weaving,
 And call him Time, father of earth's first flower.
 The air he breathes is simple motion going,
 And motion coming,—tides whose ebb and flowing
 Only repeat life's gift and death's bereaving.

Yet in us ever is poor Time. We breathe him
 Outward for life, and inward for our dying,
 When like a bird come homeward from long flying

He sleeps while white memorial stars shall wreath him.
Silent, and half in dread, could silence tremble,
Pass on where symbols praise not nor dissemble,
Where Fate's old mask comes laughing not nor crying.

For Fate hides underneath these airs, unseen,
Although she may not change them. The last three
Hold, first the power that brings again to be
The past, from out the cave of what has been,
This is a firmament. The sixth air gives
Command of life to that which not yet lives ;
The eternal seventh awaits both thee and me.

THE PLOUGHMAN.

THE ploughing in the healthful day
The long good deed was done ;
All down the furrow gleamed a ray
Thrown by the yellow sun.

The sun upon his golden arm
Leaning his golden head,
Obeying the eternal charm,
Then to the ploughman said :—

‘ See thy labour gives me voice,—
Magic, strange with power ;
Let thy heavy veins rejoice
Evening is thine hour.

Brother Ploughman, I'm in league
 With our Eternal Lord :
 I will send divine fatigue
 My Angel : thy reward.'

The ploughman frowned and drew his coat
 Over his shoulder hard,
 And saw not through the twilight float
 A singing Angel Bard.

The Angel by his wife alit
 And sang a secret dream.
 Her footsteps back and forward flit,
 Her eyes in wonder beam.

The ploughman looked with wearied glance
 And pushed his creaking door,
 He saw the usual firelight dance,—
 The shadows on the floor,—

The usual food, the usual chair,
The usual wife with these ;
All custom'd, all unnoticed there,
Vainly they seek to please.

Vainly her arms about him thrown,
Vainly she sought his face
With love in hers ; but in his own
The plough-iron held its place.

He would have rather stayed to plough,
Turning one more long field ;
But the Sun's Angel held him now
And forced his heart to yield.

And so he supped and kissed his wife
And sat beside the door.
The moon poured down her silver life
On hill, and field, and moor.

The Angel of Fatigue upraised
The Ploughman's measuring eyes,
Learned in furrows' width, but dazed
Beneath the unfurrowed skies.

Then broke the bands of woven intent
Bound round his labouring heart.
The moonlight saw the slender rent,
And shot one silvery dart.

And with the dart came fluttering there
One seed of sacred light,
The Ploughman bowed and breathed a prayer,
The Angel said, 'Good-night.'

LOVE'S INFANCY.

YOUNG peasant mother, lately blessed
I see you smile and turn aside :
Yes, I remember last year's bride ;
I know what lips are at the breast
You proudly show, and proudly hide.

But yet you saw not as you smiled,
That I within my arms enfold
A child who, when the world is old,
Will still be young, a comelier child,—
And his lips on my heart lay hold.

SPHINX AND SEKHET.

How first came gods to Egypt-land, and first
To these gods came intolerable thirst
To know why they were worshipped of all men,
No hand has written, lest the flying pen
Should wing round words forbidden, to release
From darkness and their immemorial peace
The sentence of the secret of old woes,
Begotten when the wind of desert blows,
And nurtured where the Nile renews her stream :
Yet now the broken lips in marble dream,
And now the lids of granite eyes outworn
Flutter and change, and set themselves in scorn
To face the paler light of new-born lands ;
And now the silent, shadowy, patient hands
Hold the unworshipped symbol of life's cord,
Where mingled forms, half loved, and half abhorred

Tell of old needs confessed, and magic rites
 When Lion and Woman met in lawless nights,
 Each a full god, and each unsatisfied,
 And each to each their needs of knowledge sighed
 When both consented to the monster form
 Of Sphinx and Sekhet that their bosoms warm
 Might feed at breast the child of double feature,—
 Wisdom, abhorred by every joy-fed creature.

O melancholy hearts of god-like pain !
 How often had new sorrows dropped as rain,
 Before the tangled garden in your breast
 Threw forth such poison-flower in deep unrest,
 Or parented a serpent wandering,
 That crept into the chamber of your king,
 And pastured on your silent sleeping soul,
 Filling your dreams with hunger, to unroll
 Before you the papyrus perilous
 Whereon you saw in symbols devious
 The prophecy of double joy you sought
 When this, your sinister exchange, was wrought ?

Who whispered first the will that lay in both
 To learn new worlds? Who first, when each was
 loth,
 Ventured with timid lips to murmur low
 The words forbidden? Whence derived the flow,
 When at the last, as rivers swollen wide
 The torrent came off urging, side by side
 There as you lay, each bidding each to use
 The magic neither now might still refuse?

Didst thou,—thou who art Sekhet, who hast been
 No more than woman,—thou, no more than queen
 Whom gods obeyed, no more than she who held
 Within her limbs the wonder that repelled
 All fear far off, all sorrow far as night
 When day returns, and restless hearts grow light,
 And earth more smoothly rolls, and heaven is fair,—
 Didst thou the first uplift thy wearied hair,
 And take the intolerable word and say:—
 No longer now despair has power to weigh
 Like iron upon my soul and hold me dumb,—

No longer now in vain the sweet words come
That, singing in my heart so long ago,
Made joyous hope within my veins to flow,
And certain love the colour of my face?
Now will I stay no longer to gain grace,
Or to escape destroying, or to save
This shape of womanhood that waits the grave.
O stars of magic-loving Egypt, hear:
I stand beneath you coiling off my fear,
That round me, like a wetted scarf was coiled,
And ever colder grew, and ever spoiled
The free delight that now with change I taste.
Hasten to fill your houses, while I haste
To strain the magic woof this dark hour weaves,
While the soft-footed lion swiftly leaves
The empty desert and draws near to me,
To aid this rite of lampless mystery.
Now shall the spirit of old Egypt dance,
And joy at heart, and with benignant glance
Lean over all the broad, unfolded land,
And soothe it with the hollow of his hand

That passes like a night-wind on the stream,
 Known to us only who can read his dream.
 We only wake : the gods have lived in sleep.
 They strive to keep their power from us, and keep
 Their wisdom from our hearts, but we have learned
 The art whereby the stars are nightly burned,
 And nightly born again with new delight.
 To weave a spell is but to rob the night
 Of riches kept for sleep, and out of these
 To bear off treasure for our wakeful ease,
 That else should but increase the piled-up wealth
 Of sleep, too rich already. We by stealth
 Have stolen the key, and now shall pass the door,
 And sail the stream, and find the further shore,
 And pillage and return, and take no harm.
 The spell begins : we wind our moon-spun charm.

So said you to the old Egyptian shy
 When night had opened all its wizzardy;
 So called you change, and danger from the night;
 So waited you with eyes of clouded sight

Until the lion wandered near, whose breath
 Should fill your breast, with whose divided death
 A new-divided life for him and you
 Should there arise, before the early dew
 Welcomed the sudden sunrise in the fields.

Beneath the scented winds the summer yields
 Came, through the warmly sighing air of night,
 The sudden-footed lion, like a sprite
 Present without arrival, drawing near
 Without a journey, born of empty fear.
 He came and by the woman laid him down
 There, where she fell in swoon. His bosom brown
 He leaned upon her side ; his lifted head
 Raised over hers. She lay in happy dread
 And drank his deeply-throated breath, and stirred
 In trembling of new wonder, while she heard
 A murmur come from him which seemed to tell
 His wish was hers, and he who knew her well
 Shared her mad change with joy, and gladly wrought
 What she long wished and he now thus besought :—



' Can we not change at last the dwelling-place
 Wherein our soul reserves behind each face
 The hidden dwelling of its grief malign,
 Where we are wisdom, though we still repine
 Weeping for uselessness of Fate, where still
 We are poor beauty, whose delight shall kill,
 We are wild hunger, whose desire shall thrive,
 We are mad love, whose poison makes alive ?
 Why in our peace is left no joy to taste ?
 Why spend we all calm years in gloomy haste,
 Seeking out storm-born hours, if there by chance
 Some lightning-shaft may reach its slender lance
 Touching our hearts to force new pleasure through,
 And open out as dead leaves to the dew,
 When cold night chills upon a forest burned ?
 Might we not mend the hunger we have learned
 Divided in your soul and mine asleep,
 Each lifting from our shoulders warm and steep
 The sadly-bending head that mourns above,
 Changing our dreams, while still the heart of love,
 Unchanged beat on beneath in deep unrest,

Even as each now triumphs in our breast?
 You should be Sekhet of the sun's gold fire,
 And I the cruel Sphinx, toward whom aspire
 The envies and the loves of all sad men.
 What need should come to us to turn again?
 What need to change the change? What hungering
 need
 Like to the pain that bids us now be freed,
 Each from ourself, and join our griefs in one?

So murmuring, the brown-limbed lion begun,
 So, swooning, heaving, burned the woman's heart,
 Until her soul, shrunk closely, lay apart,
 And all the stars in vain beheld the change
 Pass over him and her in ruin strange.



THEY SAY.

LIKE May, they say, the World was young,
 And Time was young, and played at mowing.
 Fortune played at hoops and flung
 And chased her wheel with laughter glowing.

But the three old Fates with laughter
 Leaned and saw the children kissing.
 Then dark clouds came following after :
 The old Serpent laughed with hissing.

Jealous old Eternity,
 Quiet like a lover's languor,
 Laughed with gentle cruelty,
 And hushed again in patient anger.

Now Time wanders greying, slaying ;
 Fortune rides her wheel to grind us :
 Still they give us, without praying,
 One kind gift,—the dust to blind us.

THE ART OF THE ANTIQUE.

DESIRE the strong, deride the weak,
Love laughing lips while life shall last ;
For all, except the End, goes past :
This is the Art of the Antique.



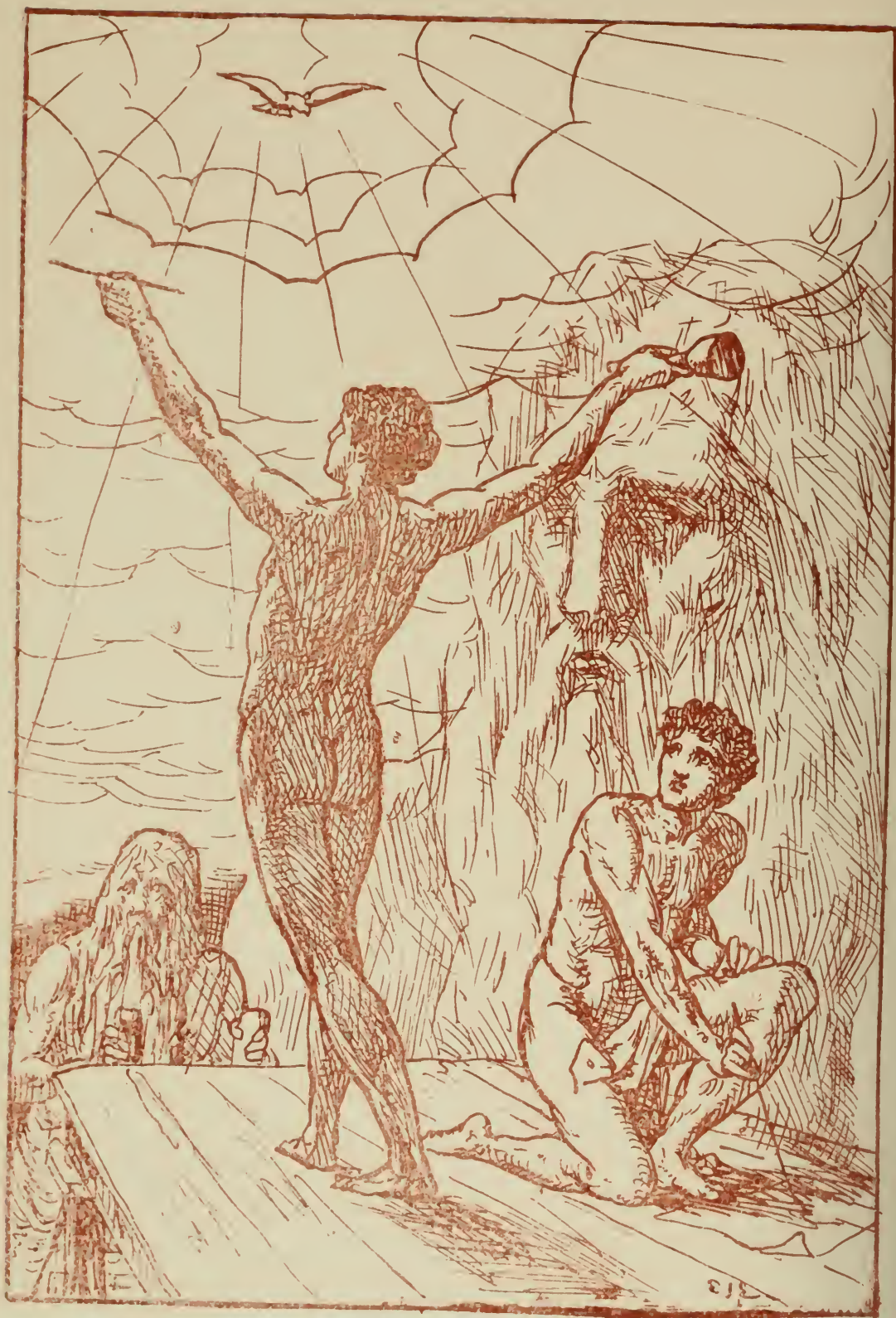
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THE HOPE OF THE ANTIQUE.

O BACCHANALS who danced, and died,—
Who danced to Bacchus, years long gone,—
You who between the vines espied,
A god-like dream, and glorious eyed,
Beholding where you danced,—who died
So many years long gone,—

No further off than last year's dead,
Or last year's laughter shall you be,
Brown and free, and garlanded,
Springing from the wine-vats red,
Still as near as last year's dead,
You and your dance shall be.

Ah God of Grapes, red-lipped and living,—
Dancers, breathless, breathing yet,—
Autumn sunshine still deceiving,—
Willingly deceived and giving,
Life to wine ; we see you living,—
Breathless, breathing yet.



Whose Image and Superscription? P 155

WHOSE IMAGE AND SUPERScription ?

WHO told us Eve was golden-haired
 Or Adam large of limb ?
 And Christ ? How looked He as he fared
 Back to the Cherubim ?
 The bearded Moses we surmise,
 Elijah, bare of brow,
 As though they stood before our eyes
 As common men do now.

Does great Jehovah wear the mask
 That first was carved for Jove ?
 Or did the heathen sculptor ask
 More than might him behove ?
 We cannot love a faceless thing,
 An earless, eyeless God,
 To whom in vain the Angels sing
 As larks above the sod.

O God, Creator of our dreams
 Shared between man and Thee,
A little make-believing seems
 No such idolatry ;
And even if the thing were sin,
 Yet must we do it still :—
Thou in Thine Image didst begin
 The Idol Thou dost kill.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

‘ Who chargeth his Angels with folly.’

‘ PEACE on the Earth !’ the Angels’ word,

Heard by the shepherds at His birth :

‘ I come not to send peace on earth,’

Said the Good Shepherd, ‘ but a sword.’

HIMSELF.

AT Golgotha I stood alone,
And trembled in the empty night :
The shadow of a cross was shown
And Christ thereon who died upright.

The shadow murmured as I went,
‘ I cannot see thee,—who art thou ?
Art thou my friend ? or art thou sent
In hate to rail upon me now.

‘ I have been Christ who linger here,
A shadow only weak and light,
And I go mad with tear on tear,
A ghost of sorrow through the night.

‘ I cannot see thee. Art thou one
Of those I lived to save,—and saved ?
I saved thee ; but the sands that run
Have filled the trace of words engraved.

‘ I wrote with finger on the ground
One pardon, then with blood on wood.
The priests and elders waited round,
But none could read of all that stood.

‘ None read, and now I linger here,
Only the ghost of one who died,
For God forsakes me, and the spear
Runs ever cold into my side.

‘ I have believed in thee when then
Thou wert not born, nor might I tell
Thy face among the souls of men
Unborn, but yet I loved thee well.

‘ Pity me now for this my death ;
 Love me a little for my love,
 I loved and died, the story saith,
 And telleth over and above

‘ Of all my early days of want,
 And days of work, and then the end,
 But telleth not how still I haunt
 My place of death and seek a friend.

‘ My God who lived in me to bless
 The earth He made has passed away ;
 And left me here companionless,
 A weary spectre night and day.

‘ I am the Ghost of Christ the Less,
 Jesus the man, whose ghost was bound
 And banished in the wilderness
 And trodden deep beneath the ground.

‘ I called it “Satan,” this that still
 Was I, and mine I might not slay,
 Until the rulers came to kill
 The God in me, who fled away.

‘ I saw him go, and cried to him,
 “Eli, thou hast forsaken me !”
 The nails were burning through each limb :
 He fled to find felicity.

‘ Ah ! then I knew the foolish wrong
 That I upon myself had wrought,
 Then floated off that Spirit strong
 That once had seemed my own heart’s thought.

‘ He would not stay to see my grave,
 I could not hold him, and I heard
 A mocker say I could not save
 Myself, when I had lost the Word.

‘ Where is the life I might have known
 If God had never lit on me ?
 I might have loved one heart alone,
 A woman white as chastity.

‘ I might have hated devils and fled
 Whene’er they came. I might have turned
 From sinners, and I might have led
 A life where no sin-knowledge burned.

‘ But between voice and voice I chose,
 Of these two selves and clave to this :—
 Who left me here where no man knows,
 And fled to dwell with light in bliss.

‘ Oh you who still have voice and deed,
 Call Eli ! Eli ! call my soul ;
 But if he come to thee and plead
 That thou shouldst let him have the whole

‘ Of all thy will and life, and be,
 Christ come again by flesh of thine,
 Thou too shalt know what came to me,
 Then when I bound my self-hood fine

‘ And called it Satan for his sake,
 And lived, and saved the world, and died
 Only for him, my light, to make
 His joy, who floated from my side,

‘ And left me here with wound of spears,
 A cast-off ghostly shade to rave,
 And haunt the place for endless years,
 Crying, “ Himself he cannot save ! ”’

So spoke the ghost of Joseph’s son
 Haunting the place where Christ was slain :
 I pray that e’er this world be done,
 Christ may relieve his piteous pain.

THE WANDERER.

AH, Christ, it were enough to know
That brooding on the unborn things
Thou gatherest up the years that go
Like a hen's brood beneath her wings.

It were enough to know that those,
More evil than the years that fall,
Who heard Thee mocked Thy safe repose
And would not trust Thee at Thy call.

It ere enough that Thou hast died,
Because Thyself Thou couldst not save,
Unless by losing from Thy side
Thy sons that drove Thee to Thy grave.



Yet more and more we know and see,
For Golgotha the shade retains
Of Him who died, the Form of Thee,
Of Him who bore Thy fleshly pains.

Nor there alone, this Form shall be
Still seen within us, Thou dost say
Until there shine on earth and sea
Light of the unforeboded Day.

O Christ the Wanderer, marked as Cain,
We know the sign upon Thy brow ;
We know the trailing cross, the stain ;
The passing footstep whispers now.

It was Thy hand, we learn at last,
That nailed Thee in that far-off year ;
Thy hand as now Thou wanderest past,
Drives deep within Thy side the spear.

While evil holds the world in grip
And men revile the eternal powers,
This vision holds Thee lip to lip
Close to our love and makes Thee ours.

ON THIS PICTURE, AND ON THIS.

THIS is the tree where Judas died,
 And this where Christ was crucified,
 And there's but little difference in,
 Save here one did for his own sin
 That which the Other did for his,
 For his and ours ; and thus it is
 That though the Church but little dreamed,
 Judas, it seems, was twice redeemed
 If there be power in Sacrifice
 To get men safe to Paradise.
 For never priests in all their pride
 Have proved that God must needs have died
 To take away such little sin
 As we, poor mortals, wander in ;
 Save only, lest it could not be

That any other man than He,
 The Man Divine could even try
 In such redeeming mode to die
 That this His single death should be
 Beforehand given for thee, and me,
 Yea, reaching both ways through mankind,
 And Caiaphas, by God made blind,
 Who knew not God with head down-bent,
 Said only 'twas expedient
 That one for all be slain and die.
 Therefore if he, and thou, and I
 (For Scripture cites his words for true)
 Did on ourselves the sentence do,
 Then need of Christ had never been.
 Therefore it is of all men seen
 That Judas did what God required.
 Doubt not that he was well inspired,
 Because the Devil had left him then.
 He did repent : what more can men ?
 He had done sin : what less have we ?
 He paid his death : what more could be ?

Then e'er ye triumph on the grave
Of one whom also Christ did save,—
For he, of all men sick and lost,
The great Physician needed most,—
Remember, were his sin not done,
Salvation had not yet begun,—
Thine own, nor mine,—and men have raved
Who doubted were Iscariot saved.
So think on this, whoe'er ye be
That see the curst and blessed tree,—
Beholding this when Judas died,
And this when Christ was crucified.

UNWORTHY TO UNLOOSE.

UPON the bank of Jordan stream,
 From Wilderness, the New Inspired
 Cried to arouse from mortal dream
 The people, wondering, drowsed, and tired.
 They came from labour, gain, and pay,
 Yet might not he, though Heavenly sent,
 Force even one to cast away
 The symbol of his mortal bent,
 'Repent,' he cried,—no more,—'Repent,'
 For who may loose a shoe, may slay.

Then came among the crowds the One
 Who darkened most his inward light,



Unworthy to Unloose p.170

The Son of Him who made the sun,
 The Son of Him who made the night,—
 The Word of Parables, who told,—
 A hidden message few might see,
 For still the world should night enfold
 The Serpent still their veil should be,
 For fear 'lest they be healed,' said he,
 Physician of the promise old.

Prophet 'Unworthy,' who are we
 That we our hands may dare to lay
 Upon the Latchet thou didst see,
 And left unopened? Who may say
 But He within the bush that burned,
 'The ground is holy, Loose thy shoes!'
 All! All! The lesson dark is learned,
 Unworthy all,—oh, who may choose?
 What voice to speak as God refuse?
 Who turn as Priests and Levites turned?

For Thou in Whom the world believes,
 The half for hope, the half for dread,
 Lo, Thou art fallen among thieves,
 And they have stripped Thee, and are fled.
 Thy symbols now like shoes unstrung,
 And scattered lie. Thy robe is free.
 Thy parables are said and sung,
 Thy shadow wounded. All may see
 Thy blood was red as ours, and we,
 No more outcast and blind are flung.

O Shepherd of the bleeding Crook
 Whose staff Thou sayest is the sword,
 Whose scrip has been the darkened Book
 Whence all Thy sheep this learning stored,
 To strive with endless rage and power
 Each against each the wolf to slay;
 Thou caster of Siloam's tower
 Upon the wanderers by the way,—
 No chosen sinners,—Hear us pray
 A prayer in this unchosen hour.

For like the blind we pray to Thee,
 And this is all our groping prayer.
 O teach us to be like, yet be
 Unlike to Thee,—O bid beware
 Lest we desire to daze the crowd
 With curing blindness, brief and near,
 While yet our blinding speech and proud
 Goes wandering forth in cloak of fear,—
 In parable. Thy call we hear,
 O raise our word and loose the shroud.

Then bid our hundred singers see
 The world on fire, and press the sod
 With naked feet, unbound and free ;
 Bid every bush be red with God ;
 O make poor symbol wedded Grace
 The Ring of Old Eternity
 Put on the bridal hand of Space.
 His footstool she has been whose face
 Might with Thy Father's kiss be free.
 He is no Judas that betrays.

And bid us be Thy second Fall,
The Cloud, wherein Thou comest again,
For Men of Sorrows are we all,
The Cloud is full with blood and rain,
A listening checks the market's hum:
The prayer is prayed : we stand aside
Like patient servants, waiting dumb.
Yet still the Flesh is Satan's pride,
Still the last Latchet remains tied,
And the bare footstep has not come.

ITALIAN MEMORIES.

ITALY.

WALLED round by dim and giant legendry
And clouded high with sunset-coloured gold,
Powdered as bloom upon the grape-like sea
And showered like petals on the mountains cold,—
Even within her borders hard to find,
One land lies bowered with love in every mind ;

One earth of this same Earth upon whose breast
We lie in sleep uneasyful, or awake
Go labouring hard in joy that is not rest,
One quickly traversed country for whose sake
Love watches with his lamp toward the past,
And Death withholds his spear and will not cast.

Through all the harsh and hurrying noise of North,
 Through love, through sorrow, through the bonds
 of sloth,

Each living man designs to wander forth
 And seek the central kingdom loved of both
 Ends of the earth, to see with his own eyes
 This fair Italian land, these high Italian skies.

For this is Italy, the name of hopes
 To some, the name of memories to all ;
 Here southward from the chilly Alpine slopes
 And northward from the sea, and sea-bird's call,
 Come all who love brief life to seek for grace
 Where life's bold lovers in dark years found place.

For here when men were labouring with their strength
 To make Heaven doubtful and give Hell more fear,
 When dying wisdom drooped in Greece at length,
 And Egypt was forgotten, lost, and drear,
 A race of whom in whispers we declare
 The Jove-like joy rose, crying, ' Life is fair ! '

Here in their past, they who are now our past
 Dug Aaron-rods that felt the light and flowered,
 Here sowed new beauty, though the sand fell fast,
 Here made new sunshine while the whole sky
 lowered ;
 And marble woke up from its dream for them,
 And bore sweet sculpture on its mountain stem.

 Around cold death they lighted candles warm,
 Round Justice in her seat hung banners bold ;
 Their towers had voices and could call to storm
 With deep-throat bells that never vainly tolled,
 And high on arching stone, strong doors above
 Painted the Son of God as fair as love.

 And earthly lovers in red cloaks, and maids
 In gold embroidered robes that softly fell,
 With floating hair, or bound in delicate braids
 Touched lutes and sang, told tales and laughed
 right well,
 Took joy and lived, and trod their rich procession ;
 Envy and Death shrank pale from Love's oppression.

So these spoiled children of their mother *Life*
 Gathered with open hands about her knee,
 Deep in her store of fruit with hungering knife
 They thrust to reach the seed-core of the tree
 And plant anew till every branch was bent
 With full white-blossomed hope, or ripe content.

And Art with divine hunger wandering by
 Plucked, and grew joyous, loved and bore a child,
 Laughing aloud as children in their high
 Pure hour of wineless drunkenness and wild
 Laugh evermore, and then fall sad apart,
 Dreaming alone, so laughed the child of Art.

So dreamed, now sorrowing sometime with the pure
 Who neither pine, nor cruel grow, nor stung
 To seek self-love in hating all who endure,
 She saddened nobly her high halls among
 Where between carven form and form she floated
 Like a white moth in evening hour unnoted.

All now are dead that knew her ; she remains,

The banquet left, the vessels dry, the song
Ended and long forgotten, still the stains

Of wine upon the table lingering long
Show the loud pleasures that no more resound
Where silent marble sentinels stand bound.

And painted faces from the ceiling clear

Gaze with their all but immemorial eyes
Upon the dreamless gazers who are here,
Where once their masters were, and whose surprise
Makes Italy seem like a sweet rare bird
That once across the windy trees was heard,

Pouring down song as though the sky bore fruit,

Now in a case shut in to show the plumes
That oft their many-coloured lights would shoot
Into the sunbeams, here in dustier tombs
Than graves of men long dead show sad and frail,
As poor dead pleasures in our hearts lie pale.

So curiously looked on, heeding not,
 The silent joys of Italy lie dead,
 While she herself endures her daily lot
 Of lost life-knowledge, and though life be fled
 Where art was life, her shadows firm and fixed
 Join a strange troupe, fair with corrupting mixed.

This shall be seen, this without pity or veils,
 Clear in the common daylight of our day,
 By him who dares to seek her, and not quails
 Before her face lying where glad she lay
 Upon her sea-dividing couch, now laid
 For death, not love, making love's heart afraid.

In death she dreamed she rose, and ruined stones
 That marked her voyage past must needs renew
 Because herself renewing. The soft tones
 Of years long over soon grew rare and few
 Hateful remasking of unneedful slime
 Hid the old signs of strength defying time.

And seeing in Rome sweet Nature's unsown flowers
 Had made a garden where a place of slaughter
 Once marked most ancient triumph of evil hours,
 She dragged the bones of her lost erring daughter
 Out of their grave of roses, and laid bare
 The frame of an old sin to shameless air.

Come near and see if all this be not so,
 Come through the glamour of love and stories old,
 Through the loud sounds that follow as we go
 Travelling alone with avarice hard and cold
 Flocking in every shape around our feet,
 While sweet fair sights float by us faint and fleet.

See in the lofty houses of soul-healing,
 Where altars once were steps of hope and duty,
 And prayer had taken hue and form and feeling,
 And reverence held her simple court of beauty,
 The gaolers of poor art hang sacred places
 With heartless silver hearts and faceless faces.

Come to the air. The common men to-day.
 Are as they were. Do rare ones make default?
 These once were Italy. Take these away,
 The high-roofed heaven is a burying-vault
 Low stooped, till some new giant comes to birth
 And Atlas-like divides the heavens and earth.

Some few have come. To save his land from death
 One gathered the torn members of her form,
 And through the wheel-disjointed limbs his breath
 Breathed life, and life returned, till sweet and warm
 She rose again and moved forgetting pain,
 But still she seeks her first clear soul in vain.

Next came the man who left things coveted,
 Even the gate of one white sea-board town,
 Because his word was given away and sped,
 Nor would he call it back and stain renown
 For so much more of power to call his own,—
 Italian he, and filled a new-made throne.

His son from that same palace heard who cried
 On southern smitten shores in terror vague,
 And seeing where near, men danced and far, men died,
 Swift journeying to the city of the plague,
 Went down for love to play a father's part,
 And found not death, but his whole people's heart.

What needs a land to seek where such are kings?
 For surely where the very crown contains
 Live manhood undestroyed by golden rings
 The far less tempted crowd more worth retains,
 If less of praise ; yet still with silent eyes
 Each painted wall, each carven stone replies ;—

“She has not art. She is not Italy.

Her limbs divided had more life, her own,
 Than now her mightier form ;—her memory
 Than all her coming hopes, her antique stone
 Than these her daily deeds, her past not passed,
 Than all the wonder by her hope fore-cast.”

She who has been the ruler, strong and wise,
 She the wild temptress of the second fall,
 She the sad teacher who with blinded eyes
 No longer sees the page she turned to all,
 Once yet again the world's true power shall be,
 Now the wise few live for the countless free.

AT ASSIST.

A SAINT was here whose feet have come and gone,
 A painter who remains to glean our love
 After the harvesting of Heaven is done.
 One sleeps below, the other shines above.
 The body of the saint, the painter's soul
 Dwell here, while loud between the anthems roll.

 The saint sleeps well, he takes his holy rest
 Beneath three roofs that shade him from the day,
 Held by his double house, a peaceful guest.
 Two painted churches and a pavement grey
 Between him and the changes of the air
 Spread like a triple shield with tracings rare.

We see him not, nor meet his mortal shell.

Corruption saw him long, and now is dead
Even as he. If dust remains to tell

It finds the story told. With bending head
Pale silence broods upon the days that give
This sleep to him, and this to us who live.

The quiet stars for us their wisdom yield ;

With many a coloured cloud the vaulting bends,
Heavy above his slumber,—a full field

Where gleam, like quiet stars till our night ends,
Fair flower-white faces dreaming sacred things,
Christ's young and old, and angels with their wings.

These are the lamp of sanctuary, these

The beacon warning all. The painter's fire
Burns over the monk's dust that sleeps at ease.

Giotto is he: St. Francis is the friar.
Good are their names in life or death, and good
As love and reverence, our immortal food.

These closely in our hearts 'tis well to lay,
 Ill is it to forget that such have been.
 Not yet the living find a loftier day,
 Nor any holy hours more golden seen
 With wealth of Heaven or Earth, than theirs that shone
 Like mountain snow the first light leaps upon.

Well move the many feet from wandering miles
 That gather and shall gather round their tomb.
 Still in this highest vault the daylight smiles.
 Still gaze pale angels in the central gloom.
 Still bends the quiet rock. They say he wept
 Full many times, poor saint, before he slept.

His grief sleeps with him, but his spirit shares
 Our watchfulness. The dark, the dim, the day
 Each here made living with a thousand prayers
 That scarcely yet have mounted on their way,
 Reveal their different lives in equal measure,—
 Silence and hope, and last, eternal treasure.

O Maker of the Living, did these men
 So little please Thee? Is this echoing shrine
 No rainbow of new promise? Or, again,
 Wilt Thou pour forth Thy fruitfulness divine?
 We know not. This we know; Thou makest them
 rare;
 Then hold we them more hard, and forward fare.

FROM PERUGIA TO ASSISI.

A LITTLE cup-like valley lies
 Between two towns in Italy,
 Filled full of summer to the skies,
 And through her, seeking for the sea,
 A softly winding river hies,
 Yet turning often as she flies
 Unwillingly away from thee,
 Sweet valley, that thy summers love, and we.

In April the young oaken leaves,
 Some grey, and purple velvet some

Foretell July, with gathered sheaves,
 Or June with merry insect's hum
 To follow soon, though May bereaves
 The buds of all soft down, and grieves
 To spread the shadowy leaflets dumb,
 Till through their harp the great winds wander-
 ing come.

First the impatient earth, grown warm,
 Tenderly parts the covering hands
 Beneath whose shield from wintry storm
 Like jewels beneath the ocean sands
 She hid her seeds all safe from harm
 Watched by the blind and silent worm.
 Now one by one they leap from bands
 Like children dancing through the sunlit lands.

So rise her flowers, some dark, some pale,
 Swaying above the bending stem,
 Bright with a little dew-drop frail,
 The brief, the ever eternal gem.

Never shall golden sun prevail
To close their eyes or bid them fail,
And warm wind loves and comforts them,
Whispering to each at night some new sweet name.

So the wild children of the ground
Leap from her silent curtained bed.
Silent clouds on the hills are found
Seeing them play in their robes of red,
Or yellow, and pink on the purple mound,
Or blue, like the high blue air around,
Till in wide armies ranked they spread,
Through whom June goes with a commanding tread.

But now the jealous air replies
In rivalry of earth, and brings
Soft moths and bright soft butterflies,
Wilder than flowers, like flowers with wings
Flown from the gardens of the skies ;
While lovers laugh to lovers' eyes,
Murmuring swift mysterious things,
They whisper as they dance in fairy-rings.

Then wide between the pearly hills
 The great rich wine of summer pours :
 Higher and higher the circle fills,
 While now no more toward the shores
 Flow the cool slender mountain rills ;
 No more the pink pale morning chills,
 Nor midnight rolls her mournful doors
 That scarce imprison the sun e'er dawn restores.

And far along the darkening trees
 A sound of seething through the glare
 Mounts evermore, as though the seas
 And not the land were boiling there,—
 As though some giant upon his knees
 Fanned through a fire the fainting breeze,
 In all the caldron vales that flare,
 While dry chicale triumph in earth and air.

Autumn : a sudden stillness falls,
 The fever of the year is broken.
 No more the loud chicala calls
 From tree to tree : the wind has spoken.

Now her returning voice appals
 The lizard sleeping on the walls
 Drunken with sun, with summer soaken,
 While the first leaf falls down, a trembling token.

Harvest, and harvest moon and sun
 Are come and gone ; who knows not well
 The gold-haired corn, where dance the fun
 Of gold fire-flies ? Who does not tell
 How reapers toil till night begun
 Calls them to song ? These things are done.
 With these, from out each seething dell,
 The enchanted summer wine unnoticed fell.

But vintage still shall foam again
 Though winter comes regretfully,
 Yet not too soon, while pitying rain
 Relieves the dark and panting tree,
 And yellow vines, a golden chain,
 Span the ploughed fields of sombre stain,
 And birds and bees take leave of thee,
 Sweet valley whence thy summer goes, and we.

CYPRESS.

WHERE the uncomforted thin shadow falls
 From scantier sunbeams of a chillier sun,—
 Where round our northern land the sea-gull calls,
 Where through the grass no emerald lizards run,
 No vine roof shelters till the heat is done.
 Nor tall white oxen the dark furrows trace,
 The cypress is not there ;
 The solemn cypress in a goodlier place
 Decks with its gloomiest green a field more fair.

Here is its home, here where the summer's tongue
 Mute elsewhere sings a hundred-voicing strain,
 Where bell-like through the day and night are rung
 Wild shrilling of sweet notes above the grain
 From unseen throats, till whispering summer rain
 Breathes suddenly between them and is dumb.
 The cypress tree is here,
 The fire-fly's sudden lamp, the may-fly's hum
 Haunt round its shade and ease it of its fear.

Were now the cypress tree less tall, the sky
 Would be less near. Were cypress shade less dark
 Less tragic from the corn the lone fire-fly
 Would bear unnoticed his strange fate-lit spark ;
 Less closely would we hide, less panting mark
 The near note of the sweet pathetic voice,
 The lonely owlet cries ;
 Less love the heavy noon-day, less rejoice
 Ever returning stars to see you leap the skies.

Take love and thanks, take friendship, rhyme and
 praise,
 O cypress tree, here on Italian hills,
 Take from the purple night, and blue of days,
 From soft gold of the changing hour that chills
 With sweet and doubtful breath of scent that fills
 With strange delight the slumber of the bird,
 Take incense of all hours,
 And give thy mystic messages half heard,
 Draw down the stars and watch the midnight
 flowers.

SICILY.

WITHIN the opening palm of the early year,
 Fair with her many flocks, full Sicily
 Rich in young flowers, and ancient caverns drear,
 Bound round with echoing bays and laughing sea,
 With green by grey, and pleasure beside fear,

Shows like another world upon the world,—
 Winter above, and fire within, the sea
 Like air around, the air like sea, where hurled
 The white smoke of her lips floats languidly,
 Like a white sail, slow swaying, half unfurled.

And all her trees bear fruits, and all their leaves
 Open in spring to show white flowers within
 Like throats, and every hill whose curve upheaves
 Glow, covered, covered bright little flocks that win
 The breathing heights. Like flocks her autumn sheaves,

Like flocks the flying fleeces of the sea,
Bright shine the foamy stones on grasses green,
And fleece-white shows the snowy almond-tree
Far glimmering on the level pasture green,
Or rare on upward slopes of mountain free.

And sunlit villages like silent sheep
On cool high hills remotely dream, or roused
By their own whiteness out of dewy sleep
Seem gathering for the pasture left unbrowsed
Where fresher from the dawn her streamlets leap.

Island of many flocks and many hills
And many thorns, and many caves and tombs,
And spring-pure wines, and wine-bright water
rills,
And golden gleams of light, and golden glooms,—
Filled with old story as an echo fills

Your caverns where a sudden sound has leaped,
 You sleep, O little land, while for your sake
 Waking beside you long our hearts are kept;
 Wake soon, and pour upon us when you wake,
 Love for our love that watched you while you slept.

MAIDENHAIR.

BEFORE the sun the sunflower,
 Before the moon the eglantine,
 White lilies underneath the fir,
 Blue air about the glowing vine,
 And twilight for the sweet woodbine.

But down the purple hollow wet
 Where droops a torrent's rainbow rare,
 Where shade to shade the stones have met,
 See there the little Maidenhair,
 And woo her for her secret there.

VILLA DORIA GARDEN, ALBANO.

DIANA has been here. The empty wood
Remembers yet. The mosses where she stood
Still feel her feet, the leaves still turn and bend,
As though not yet had fallen forgetful end
Upon their startled pleasure, half alarm,
There where she touched them with her light cool arm
And, passing, caught the dew-drop on her knee,
Her outstretched hand from the new-awakened tree
Had shaken in the silver hour of dawn.
Diana has been here, but she has gone.

The woodman's voice, the toll of hollow doom
Rung by the iron falling in the room
Of her whose hand was gentle here but now,—
The broken sobbing of the fallen bough,—
The breath of oxen trailing the slain trees,
These are the sounds, the mournful harmonies

That measure the scared singing of the bird,
 Whose airy voice above their murmur heard
 Wails for her nest thrown down the trodden wood,
 As we to see no more where once Diana stood.

A SECRET.

O ITALY that hast been Rome, and Rome
 That borest rule over the world, now bear
 The whole world's love, and be the whole world's home.
 Thou, for whom lovers learn of love to spare
 Some food from their forever hungered hearts,
 Give thanks and take and eat with us. Thou cave
 Where time delights to hide the fairest parts
 Of things once full and fair he could not save,
 But by destroying, we now crave to know
 For which of thy delights we love thee best,
 Nor till thou tell us will our hearts find rest,
 But wander on in search. The seasons go,
 Yet still we know not which thy secret heard

With ears more undeceived than ours, for sweet,
 Too sweet the murmured sound above the word
 Covers the sense with music. Oh repeat,
 Repeat again. We hear as men in dreams,
 Who know in sleep, yet waking cannot tell
 What was the wisdom then revealed so well
 And yet not learned : like this thy secret seems.

Be not displeased that all the watchful hours
 Of blue pavilioned spring are spent anew
 In waiting for thy words. Towards the blue
 Above the city lift the watchman's towers
 Yet are not high enough,—what tower should be ?
 There is a starlight the star shall not see,
 And every summer eve a bird flies through
 The whisper of the hour and hears it not,
 Nor have we found the very night,—the day,—
 The tree, the stone, the sacred trysting-spot
 Where waits thy secret. Ever on the way
 And ever glad we go, and ever see

This path will lead us well,—this finds,—and this,—

Here on the stem of this half moving tree /

Were we to lay, as face on face, one kiss,

It surely would reply : the long held speech

Would shape itself in faintly murmuring leaves,

And the wide arms that through the morning reach

And pierce the day, and shake the sloping leaves

Would point where we should go, and find at last

The untrodden path by which thy shadow passed.

Where is the hour not well companioned round

With little movements of the earth and air,

And stillnesses that hold more near than sound

The heart that feels their hands around it there ?

When most are linked the bonds whose unseen ends

Enfold like hands, and cleave like hearts of men,

Still felt long after lost like grasp of friends ?

When at the chill of night the cypress bends

And the stars see it and come down, and when

The little silent leaves of thirsty weeds

Beneath the moon reach for the velvet dew,

And each receives a drop for all his needs
 Bright as bright eyes of fairies, fleet and few,
 Or when in hours too full for aimless sleep
 The waited sunrise and late moon-rays peep
 Over the shoulders of the hills that stay,
 Watching the night and guarding long the day.

O patient hills, and ever flowing sky,
 Hung like a veil made liquid by the air
 That moves within like water,—curtain fair
 Bordered with trees below, and grasses high !
 O Earth, mother of these, still teeming rife
 With flowers bending in their virgin life,
 That first feel love and spring and joy to meet,—
 You forests where the shadowy winds avow
 The love they tell not to the sun's wide heat,
 And long white roads that ask but patient feet
 And promise all the world in change, even now
 We learn Earth has, as we, a heart to beat.
 Warm Land, thou art a living power as we,
 Thou seekest for our love as we seek thee,

Therefore no look of love, no touch so fleet
 Let fly, let rest on thee, as bird's feet bow
 The budding branch one instant,—none so swift
 But he that gives has given away his peace ;
 The light kiss laid, no power of Time may lift,
 And Love, who holds all else within his gift,
 Feeds his few slaves on all, except release.

That thou hast shown us this we love thee best :
 This is thy secret, and our hearts find rest.

NIGHT IN ROME.

No, let not vision in sound of Roman bells
 Possess our night with shadows woven of sleep,
 Nor sleep herself, deep well of deepest wells,
 Draw night in Rome, to drown within her deep ;
 Come out ! come out ! Here silent sentinels
 Waked by the moon their wordless vigil keep.

See, in the shadowy moveless air alone,
 Waiting the wandering of our ghost-like feet,
 Are ghosts more grim, poor shades of patient stone,
 Warmed half to life by yesterday's noon heat,
 Sleepless upon the earth, despairing thrown,
 Or stern, erect, with hearts too cold to beat.

They stand like life struck through with death's command
 Where death lies pierced with the eternal peace,—
 Brothers by brothers newly dead they stand
 With lips grown hard, more pale than dewiest fleece,
 And ask a movement from the marble hand
 To say,—Is death imprisonment or release.

And thou, O Ruin of a hundred eyes
 All hollow in the unsheltered skull upright,—
 Thou famine after banquet! Our surmise
 Puts life within those caves, where laughing sight
 Once leapt, then lingered, but where now the cries
 Of birds insult by day, and breath of flowers by night.

More than a skull whom life with long forsaking
 Leaves naked to the crumbling of cold air :
 More than wide hollow eyes for ever waking,
 For ever blind ; more than a garden rare,
 Thou art a billow of sea for ever breaking
 Whose thunder and heavy flood our terror spare.

Safe in thy shadow, magic, moveless wave
 Long balanced like a falcon over bending
 We tread, like dreams that peer into a grave,
 While danger sleeps and fear needs no defending,—
 Or Israel faithful when her leader's stave
 Had power on wind and sea, their war suspending.

Better than labouring dreams in sleep's hard leisure
 To hide within thy cavern depth of shade,
 And see far off the moon still freely measure
 Her arch across the heavens that never fade,
 Consoling, like remembered loves or pleasure
 Tired hearts of life, or death, or time afraid.

Therefore within the circle of thy caves,
Thou honeycomb deserted by the bees,—
Thou ice-bound sea with waves frozen over waves,—
Thou eyeless casket of lost jewelries,—
Thou sad funereal pile of emptied graves,—
Near whom both life and death are ill at ease.

Servant of neither, watcher over each,
This night while neither guards without the door,
I steal from sleep, and climb with hands that reach,
And on thy knees for sacrifice I pour,
Between two silences, one whispered speech
Of rhymes that pass where silence shall endure.



Ellis, Edwin John.

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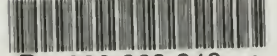
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